

**Strategic Plan  
2022**



# Preamble

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The purpose of this preamble is to provide definitions for various terms used within the Strategic Plan. Franciscan University refers to the collection of 24 Catholic American universities that embrace a common mission to introduce and disseminate knowledge of Franciscan values and practices through their educational programs.

Community refers to all who are associated with Alvernia, including students, faculty and staff at all locations and in all modalities, as well as alumni and friends.

Reference to Alvernia's Franciscan heritage refers to the heritage that Alvernia University shares with the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters and includes the following two considerations. Through its direct connection to the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, the foundresses of the university, Alvernia is directly connected to the larger historical and spiritual Franciscan legacy founded in the 13th century by St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare of Assisi. At the same time, Alvernia University enjoys

independence from, and generativity beyond, the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters by means of which the university has created its own distinctive Franciscan identity, mission and heritage. Thus, Alvernia University has produced new avenues for Franciscan life and expression in the United States of America and elsewhere in the world.

The concept of stewardship aligns with a Franciscan perspective on sustainability when one views the environment as God's creation. Sustainability includes four interlinked dimensions: environmental responsibility (e.g., energy and water conservation, recycling, transportation, green space); social equity (e.g., shared decision making, sense of community, diverse campus community, equitable pay); economic health (e.g., purchasing locally manufactured items, hiring people from within the local community); and cultural vitality (e.g., values, heritage, sense of place, and retaining and respecting traditions). (Hawkes, 2006)

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**As a private institution working for the public good, Alvernia University is built upon a commitment to the community, evidenced, in part, by the development of high-value partnerships. As good stewards of limited resources, Alvernia University actively seeks, and engages with, community partners to create mutually beneficial relationships.**

**The academic experience of the students at the university goes far beyond what happens in individual classrooms or courses. Although academics are central to the mission of the university, the student experience at Alvernia will be shaped by everything they encounter. In the classroom, students will be engaged and challenged, developing the skills they need to be successful upon graduation. Alvernia takes a holistic approach to the student experience, encouraging students to expand their horizons and participate fully in the life of the university through their participation in residence life, athletics and cocurricular activities.**

**Alvernia's Comprehensive Regional University model embraces education that puts students and student outcomes at the center of all decisions by aligning human and financial resources to meet student developmental needs in a sustainable way. The model thrives on community partnership, which allows us to create a comprehensive institution that offers a world-class, transformational (mind, body, spirit and community) and affordable student experience while catalyzing economic and community development to ensure long-term sustainability for the university and the communities we serve.**

# Alvernia Advantage Balanced Scorecard

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## Five Alvernia Advantage Pillars



**Franciscan Identity &  
Values (Mission)**



**Academic Experience  
(Academic Success &  
Satisfaction)**



**Community Engagement**



**Student Experience**



**Stewardship**



- Objective
- Initiative
- Measure

# Franciscan Identity & Values (Mission)

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## **OBJECTIVE: Fostering growth of Franciscan Mission across the university**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Assessing mission integration throughout divisions.</b>	Coordinate a universitywide audit using the newly revised Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities
<b>Increasing mission-based decision practices campuswide.</b>	Implement Hiring for Mission, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Implement Contemplative Dialogue Card into all major decision-making arms of the university.
<b>Fostering relationships with Bernardine Franciscan Charism and university constituents.</b>	Create intentional programs for faculty, staff and students that communicate the values and tradition of the Bernardine Franciscan Charism.
<b>Increasing alumni and friends' engagement with mission and identity.</b>	Provide intentional programming and collaboration with Institutional Advancement.

## **OBJECTIVE: Building an inclusive and equitable Franciscan community**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Assessing campus climate to foster an equitable university environment.</b>	Create Baseline of Campus Climate by implementing the USC Race Climate Survey. Create a Bias Response protocol. Build out Diversity and Inclusion University Strategic Plan.
<b>Providing more inclusive interfaith experiences for university community.</b>	Focus on two non-Abrahamic feast celebrations while also continuing to celebrate major Abrahamic feasts on all Alvernia campuses. Establish Alvernia Interfaith Community Council – establishing regular membership, meeting times and events.
<b>Expanding impact and integration of Clare's Cupboard into Alvernia community.</b>	Promote well-being of students by meeting basic needs. Offer opportunities for service and advocacy through volunteer service and internships.

**OBJECTIVE: Enriching the spiritual life and vocational paths of the Alvernia student**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Promoting our Catholic identity.	Increase participation at campus masses. Host two Identity Series events that focus on prayer and vocation.
Engaging in ecumenical dialogue and what it means to follow our Christian vocation.	Create praise and worship opportunities with Intersarsity Christian Fellowship.
Fostering community through engaging programming and prayer/retreat opportunities for students.	Rebuild retreat programming targeted at specific majors, teams and clubs. Offer hybrid options and inclusive retreat experiences.
Reinvigorating our students' commitment to and understanding of service through domestic and international Alternative Breaks and pilgrimages.	Create incoming student Alternative Break in the reading area that fosters understanding of service as a Core Value.  Resume Alternative Breaks programming and formation for current students that maintain connections, service and solidarity opportunities with Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, as well as regional, national and international agencies for service.

**OBJECTIVE: Ensuring support of every student throughout their academic experience**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Providing faculty mentors and role models.	Institute training program for all new faculty through the Office of the Provost, with plans for a mentor program by year 2.
Cultivating, resourcing and supporting staff in providing comprehensive services.	Institutionalize the initiatives from the Title III grant.
Fostering a university community culture that recognizes the importance of staff as integral to university operations.	Conduct a comprehensive climate survey and initiate process for faculty/staff communication.

**OBJECTIVE: Serving the community by engaging in activities that support our Franciscan mission**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Integrating internship opportunities allowing for immersion in the broader community in meaningful ways.	Create agreement for model partnership between academic community and industry partners for experiential learning in classes.
Identifying and developing sustainable service learning opportunities in conjunction with our community partners.	Institute service in solidarity model where all service opportunities are connected to a time of solidarity, formation and reflection grounded in Catholic Social Teaching Principles and/or Franciscan core values.

**OBJECTIVE: Fostering a community of faculty and staff committed to academic excellence and student-centered learning**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Attracting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff.	Utilize human resource data regarding faculty and staff demographics and implement the Hiring for Mission, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
Creating opportunities for developing community among faculty and among faculty, staff and administration.	Develop the use of Alumni House for faculty. Reestablish university community book club. Create periodic sponsored opportunities for community gathering.
Sustaining a culture and traditions of faculty self-governance and of shared university governance.	Develop formation opportunities for community awareness of the importance of, and opportunities for engagement in, faculty self-governance and shared university governance.
Committing resources adequate to enable faculty to flourish in scholarship, teaching, advising and service.	Assess faculty resource needs to create a three-year plan that will result in application of resources in identified areas of need.
Committing resources adequate to enable staff to flourish in their respective areas of responsibility and expertise.	Assess staff resource needs to create a three-year plan that will result in application of resources in identified areas of need. Make resources available for staff directors, at a minimum, to participate in networking opportunities and conferences.

# Academic Experience (Academic Success & Satisfaction)

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**OBJECTIVE: Ensuring a learning environment that includes the appropriate infrastructure and technology to enable the delivery of effective teaching and support innovative pedagogy**

Initiative	Measure
Nurturing and expanding engaged classroom communities.	Create ongoing opportunities for faculty to be engaged in conversations about, and develop their skills in, creating engaged classroom communities.
Committing to faculty consultation in the decision-making process to address faculty and student needs in the teaching and learning environment.	Develop institutional process for such faculty consultation.
Providing faculty, including adjuncts, access to and training in contemporary instructional technologies to enhance the learning environment.	Identify necessary instructional technology skills for effective pedagogy differentiated by educational settings and modes of delivery.

## **OBJECTIVE: Encouraging Intellectual Development**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Integrating Catholic and Franciscan intellectual traditions throughout the educational experience.</b>	Identify what each of the following four theological and spiritual traditions means for Alvernia University: the Catholic Intellectual tradition, the Franciscan Intellectual tradition, the Bernardine Franciscan tradition, and the Alvernia University tradition.  Identify the standards of Catholic Social Teaching.
<b>Keeping the liberal arts at the heart of every educational experience through the general education (SEARCH) curriculum.</b>	Develop a holistic plan for maintaining the integrity of SEARCH as distributed across the new academic structure and further integrating SEARCH throughout the One Alvernia model for all students.
<b>Facilitating growth of Alvernia as a regional comprehensive university while preserving and fostering the "small-college" relationships robust collegiate student relationships with faculty and staff.</b>	Identify areas of growth for developing relationships between and among students and robust collegiate student relationships with faculty and staff.
<b>Emphasizing ethics throughout our rigorous education.</b>	Identify and demonstrate where ethics is taught within our curriculum.
<b>Emphasizing critical thinking throughout our rigorous education.</b>	Identify opportunities to measure growth in critical thinking.
<b>Ensuring a full range of courses for students throughout a wide variety of arts and sciences and professional disciplines.</b>	Determine the availability of creative options for students to fulfill their SEARCH requirements and tailor their educational experience in a manner meaningful to a variety of students.



**OBJECTIVE: Providing experiential learning and professional development opportunities**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Integrating experiential learning opportunities such as internships, service learning, clinical or field experiences, and conference participation, allowing for immersion in the professional community in meaningful ways.</b>	Determine the availability of experiential learning opportunities for students and assess the successfulness of their integration.

**OBJECTIVE: Fostering lifelong learners and ethical leaders serving communities**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Offering opportunities to build resilience and skills that enable students to persist and achieve their academic goals, flourish in their professional lives, and be reflective and ethical citizens.</b>	Assess the available opportunities and determine expansion plan.

# Community Engagement

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## **OBJECTIVE: Engaging in economic development in the regions that Alvernia serves**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Commencing the Reading CollegeTowne initiative in furtherance of Alvernia's commitment to community outreach and community building.</b>	<p>Plan and facilitate at least one community service event and one service-learning course partnership each semester that are aligned with the Reading CollegeTowne Initiative.</p> <p>Continue to develop and expand partnerships and sponsorships to make the O'Pake Institute for Economic Development and Entrepreneurship sustainable. Expand the Fellows and Mentor Program and the number of clients we will serve in the region.</p> <p>Create a functional regional entrepreneurial ecosystem to leverage regional resources and assets to maximize economic development opportunities.</p> <p>Continue to expand our O'Pake Business Incubator and Technology Transfer Office and make the O'Pake Financial Services activities operational.</p>
<b>Seeking opportunities for coordination of community philanthropic support, as well as government and private funding for local and university initiatives.</b>	<p>Support Institutional Advancement in their philanthropic endeavors to garner financial support for community and university initiatives through participation on community boards, task forces and coordinated strategic actions.</p> <p>Successful completion of the board of trustees-approved five-year, \$45 million comprehensive campaign in support of the philanthropic priorities of the institution.</p>

**OBJECTIVE: Engaging in community development in the regions that Alvernia serves**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<p><b>Educating students to be engaged, ethical and empowered citizens who value diversity and contribute to local and global communities through purposeful leadership, activism and service.</b></p>	<p>100% participation of SEARCH classes in our Service Saturdays. At least 65% of Alvernia University students will participate in community and/or global service projects per year. Engage at least 35 students in the Franciscan Servant Leader Certification Program.</p>
<p><b>Attracting students and strategic partnerships through community engagement offerings.</b></p>	<p>Identify incoming students who have a service/sustainability passion and host an immersion experience prior to orientation, which will then carry over throughout their four-year Alvernia University experience in alignment with student career pathways and passions.</p>
<p><b>Fostering collegiality, active listening and participation in creative discussions about identifying and addressing local needs.</b></p>	<p>Actively seek membership and engagement with groups connected to local need in the downtown and surrounding Berks County community. 100% participation in reflection associated with service. Develop student focus groups each semester to provide feedback on practice and to identify future needs. Plan and facilitate at least one educational session each semester in our downtown to address food insecurity. Expand our current Bog Turtle Creek Farm efforts to support the availability of affordable produce for the residents of the city.</p> <p>Assemble and work with a varied group of local leaders to create a coalition that will work together to identify, create and implement solutions to economically related neighborhood issues in downtown Reading.</p>

**OBJECTIVE: Fostering engagement in appreciation of and access to the fine and performing arts and artists**

Initiative	Measure
<p><b>Educating students to be engaged, ethical and empowered citizens who value diversity and contribute to local and global communities through purposeful leadership, activism and service.</b></p>	<p>Plan and assist in facilitating one event each semester in cooperation with local performing and fine arts groups.</p> <p>Work with local arts-related institutions (e.g., GoggleWorks and Santander Arena) to enhance local arts programming and build a plan to enhance local venues to support art activities.</p>
<p><b>Cultivating alumni who continue to celebrate and enrich their local communities.</b></p>	<p>Engage alumni in at least 50% of our community events each semester. Utilizing the data from the Alumni Attitude survey outlining how alumni wish to be engaged with the university, engage alumni in existing opportunities, or create new opportunities, for community service on campus. Highlight the service alumni perform in their communities in university publications and through a newly established Service Award.</p>
<p><b>Embracing our role as conservators of local history, heritage and environment.</b></p>	<p>Work with our surrounding community and Alvernia University faculty/staff to schedule one event each semester that celebrates our local history, heritage and environment.</p>

**OBJECTIVE: Developing and maintaining partnerships in the regions that Alvernia serves**

Initiative	Measure
<p><b>Ensuring partnerships that expand access to education and strengthen campus and community life.</b></p>	<p>Strengthen our connection with Reading School District and surrounding local school districts through targeted programming. Add two new community partners in 2022-23. Ensure a process that enables 100% of all students to participate in least one internship experience with a community partner during their time at Alvernia University. Support students through Real-World Learning Grants connected to experiential learning opportunities.</p>
<p><b>Expanding partnerships with organizations that improve the health and wellness of communities and individuals.</b></p>	<p>Increase opportunities to partner with health and wellness communities and individuals through service-learning classes, service opportunities, creative partnerships, and regularly scheduled quarterly network meetings.</p>
<p><b>Prioritizing peacemaking and strengthening interfaith relationships.</b></p>	<p>Support Mission &amp; Ministry with at least one event per semester in their efforts to prioritize peacemaking and strengthen interfaith relationships.</p>

# Student Experience

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**OBJECTIVE: Recruiting and retaining students who can be successful at the University and contribute to the academic community and student experience**

Initiative	Measure
Developing an enrollment model focused on building the class based on enrollment goals by major, athletics, equity, diversity and inclusion, and student engagement.	Meet or exceed budgeted enrollment goals annually for traditional students, transfer students, adults, international and graduate students.  Use EAB survey data and Health Care Research Corporation matric/non-matric survey to assess yield improvement year over year.
Enhancing student services for adult learners, including career development, academic advising, student engagement, community engagement and graduation outcomes.	Baseline survey conducted in 2020. Survey adult learners annually. Collect graduation outcomes and placement six months and one year post-graduation using National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) standards.
Creating a Graduate Student Association to allow for ongoing student feedback. Establishing an advising structure within the four colleges that is flexible and responsive.	Graduate student retention. Graduation placement/outcomes six months post-graduation.

**OBJECTIVE: Providing developmentally appropriate programs and services for all students, including residents, commuters, athletes, veterans, transfers, international and adults**

Initiative	Measure
Providing living-learning environments that are conducive to the curricular and cocurricular experience.	Use the ACUHO Survey, annually, for all residents. Review the Aladdin Food Satisfaction Survey annually and provide opportunities for feedback through Food Services Committee of SGA.

**OBJECTIVE: Recruiting and retaining students from diverse backgrounds to feel seen and valued within the Alvernia University community by developing a network of academic, cocurricular, financial and mentoring support services**

Initiative	Measure
<p>Developing a robust set of experiences for students from marginalized populations and students of color. Implementing leadership development opportunities, mentoring opportunities through Institutional Advancement, a summer bridge program, emergency aid program and on-campus employment.</p>	<p>Survey students regularly via the USC Campus Climate Survey. Use the data to improve the culture on campus through our Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Council, faculty &amp; staff training, hiring practices, student services and programs.</p>

**OBJECTIVE: Developing student-athletes into competitors both in and out of the classroom**

Initiative	Measure
<p>Fostering competitive athletic programs with teams going into postseason competition on an annual basis.</p>	<p>Engage the Student Athlete Advisory Committee in focus groups to continually improve the student-athlete experience, understand the unique needs of student-athletes and improve campus life for athletes.</p>

**OBJECTIVE: Inspiring an engaging intellectual and creative life**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Increasing undergraduate research and expanding opportunities for internships, job shadowing and mentoring.	Measure undergraduate research projects annually to assess increased participation.
Increasing our commitment to enrich the experience of academically motivated and talented undergraduate students.	Investigate ways to incentivize student enrollment and engagement in the Honors Program at the University, including the possibility of establishing an Honors College.
Creating academic and service-learning communities for both graduate and undergraduate students.	Create spaces to help build communities and engagement among groups of students on campus.
Enhancing offerings in, and support of, intellectual and creative arts.	Assess current offerings in these areas with a goal of building more robust programming.
Providing opportunities for civil dialogue and increased understanding of diverse ideas, varied perspectives and global issues.	Establish and communicate a database of these activities.

**OBJECTIVE: Nurturing an environment that prepares students for their personal and professional goals**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Scaling career services to meet the needs of a diverse group of students. Providing career development opportunities that are part of the academic experience in the classroom.	Using NACE standards to develop career services that match student need.
Developing a Student Employment Center that provides students on-campus employment aligned to their major.	Develop a graduate student employment resource.

**OBJECTIVE: Providing opportunities for students to engage outside the classroom through a robust Student Affairs area**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Engaging students in leadership development through student organizations, clubs, leadership opportunities, student activities, wellness programming, commuter services, orientation, international student services, residence life and first-year experiences.	Use NESSE data to gauge student satisfaction and high-impact practices biannually.



# Stewardship



**OBJECTIVE: Developing and incorporating a holistic model of sustainability in the areas of economics, environment, social justice and community building**

Initiative	Measure
<p><b>Committing to the long-term financial sustainability of the university through implementation of the “comprehensive regional university” model and a focus on expanding partnerships.</b></p>	<p>Identify and evaluate new programs that expand our regional presence to attract new students and retain current students.</p> <p>Enhance, refresh and provide additional resources for existing programs.</p> <p>Expand recruitment in a greater regional area as well as internationally.</p> <p>Successfully launch CollegeTowne.</p> <p>Develop new philanthropic partnerships in a greater regional area.</p> <p>Actualize and support effective leadership in the new academic structure.</p> <p>Commit to expanded support of faculty and staff, including support of faculty and student scholarship.</p>
<p><b>Modeling environmentally sustainable practices in decision-making and operations.</b></p>	<p>The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment &amp; Rating System™ (STARS) will be used as our self-reporting framework to measure sustainability performance across academics, engagement, operations and planning. Through participating in STARS, Alvernia University can earn points toward a STARS Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum rating, with each seal representing significant sustainability leadership.</p>
<p><b>Prioritizing partnerships and sponsorships with organizations that have a focus on (i) ethical leadership, (ii) corporate responsibility and (iii) community building that incorporates democratic citizenship building.</b></p>	<p>Develop intake discussion points for use with organizations to confirm their focus on those elements that incorporate democratic citizenship building.</p>

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Achieving optimal infrastructure, systems and processes for efficient and sustainable operations.</b>	Create and deploy a software technology plan that (i) reduces redundancies, (ii) maximizes efficiencies and (iii) reinvests resources into the student experience.
<b>Committing to the preservation of our shared heritage with the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters and providing the environment for this heritage to flourish.</b>	Engage in the Laudato Si' Action Platform as outlined by the Vatican. Develop statement and action plan in conjunction with the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters and the Alvernia University Sustainability Office that addresses seven sectors of improvement as a Catholic University.
<b>Promoting engagement with the richness of the institutional and cultural histories of the University and the local area and region.</b>	Increase the number of media placements locally and regionally. Increase the number of engagements on the website and social media platforms.

## **OBJECTIVE: Fostering Engagement**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Committing to our caretaking responsibility of alumni and families through activities and enhanced relationship building.</b>	Increase the number of alumni and families engaged in university activities by at least 20%, including, but not limited to, philanthropy, volunteerism, event attendance and other activities, to enhance the overall student experience.
<b>Collaborating with senior citizens, business leaders and community leaders through the growth of the Alvernia Seniors College, the O'Pake Institute for Economic Development and Entrepreneurship, and other means of engagement.</b>	Develop a process to determine active engagement in community experiences with a further goal of increasing the number of participants in each area to enhance the student experience.  Continue enhancement and growth of the O'Pake mentor program, including incorporation of alumni and community partners.

## **OBJECTIVE: Committing to shared governance**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Ensuring the success of the institution through acknowledging the respective roles of students, trustees, staff, faculty, and administration and empowering these groups to participate effectively in the shared governance system.</b>	Develop a survey to determine where and how each role is currently engaged.

**OBJECTIVE: Ensuring the responsible use of resources by seeking efficiencies wherever possible in consultation with all stakeholders**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Ensuring appropriate staffing.</b>	Assess the needs on campus to support the health and well-being of the University community.
<b>Streamlining communication, processes and procedures to ensure responsible use of resources.</b>	Ensure the effectiveness of communication with respect to resources between and among the board, senior leadership, faculty and staff through formal processes.