

COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL AND LIBERAL STUDIES

STRATEGIC PLAN

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2023-2028

Contents

Introduction

Mission

Vision

Goal 1: Aggressively Provide Access

Goal 2: Create Opportunities to Succeed

Goal 3: Outcomes Focused Academics

Goal 4: Strengthen Research Enterprise

Goal 5: Recruit, Retain, Reward and Recognize our People

Goal 6: Exemplify Operational Excellence

Goal 7: Generate and Steward Financial Resources

INTRODUCTION

The College of Professional & Liberal Studies is the campus leader for an agile curriculum that meets lifelong student learning and demands. We support and encourage our core subject students with flexible, destination programming that focuses on student outcomes while also incubating, growing, sustaining, and transitioning high maintenance programs for partners across the University of Memphis.

As a leader in innovation and personalized learning, the College of Professional and Liberal Studies provides access to quality educational programs and services for a diverse community of learners who seek change through increased knowledge and skill. We are known as innovators of new programs, a catalyst for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary efforts throughout the campus, and a facilitator for the community to interact with the University.

Flexible and specialized curriculum offers each student a more customized degree program. Students can earn a degree in multiple settings, online, face to face or hybrid, and even utilize professional work experience towards college credit.

With nearly five decades of storied history, formerly known as "University College," and strong community bonds, we meet our students where they are in their journey, provide unique degrees, and find creative solutions to challenges.

Our current programs include:

Graduate Programs

Doctor of Liberal Studies

Master of Liberal Studies

Professional Leadership Concentrations

Strategic Leadership

Human Resources Leadership

Training and Development

Certificates

Aviation Human Factors

Liberal Studies

Strategic Leadership

Undergraduate Programs

Commercial Aviation

Child Development & Family Studies

Child Life Specialist

Early Care and Learning

Early Intervention Specialist

Early Care and Learning Administration

Information Technology

Manufacturing Technology Management

Technology Management Services

Music and Entertainment

Urban Studies

Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services

Disability Studies & Rehabilitation Services

Emergency Management

Health Services

Human Services

Legal Studies

Organizational Leadership

Nonprofit Development & Administration

Asian Studies & International Trade

Religious Studies

Judaic Studies

Design Your Own Degree

Accelerated Bachelor of Liberal Studies to Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS)

Minors

Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services

Child Development

American Studies

Religion in Society

Legal Studies

Community Action and Social Change

Programs We Have Successfully Incubated & Transitioned in the Last 10 years.

- Health Services Administration to Health Care Leadership in the College of Health Sciences
- Fashion Design to Department of Art/College of Communication & Fine Arts
- Fashion Merchandising to Art/College of Communication & Fine Arts
- Dance Education to Department of Theatre & Dance/College of Communication & Fine Arts
- Entrepreneurship minor – Fogelman College of Business & Economics
 - Programs that will be moving in the next academic year
 - Music & Entertainment to College of Communication & Fine Arts
 - Religious Studies to College of Arts & Sciences

MISSION

Provide rigorous academic programs that are grounded in critical and creative thought, designed to answer market demands, and flexible enough to accommodate the lives and careers of people from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds.

VISION

To enrich the communities we serve, by equipping the modern workforce to lead today's evolving economy of non-traditional, interdisciplinary, and entrepreneurial careers.

The following goals align with the 8 goals laid out by the University's Strategic Plan, the supporting information in our College's Strategic Plan lays out how we will strive to fulfill the mandates of our Mission and Vision.

GOAL #1 – Aggressively Provide Access

Cultivating and Continuing Relationships that Attract and Retain Students

Our college has a long history of collaborative efforts with nontraditional student recruitment and retention initiatives, such as Finish Line and UM Global. We also strongly utilize a number of corporate partnerships that incentivize current and prospective employees with the University's partners to further their educations with us.

Focus on Lifelong Learning, through Continuity of Programming and Transfer Friendliness

We work to ensure a continuity of programming from dual enrollment specific tracks for area high school students, through 3+3 collaborations with Cecil C. Humphrey's School of Law, and through our focus on lifelong learning. Our prior learning credit and transfer credit friendliness encourages enrollment and completion by students who otherwise feel disillusioned with post-secondary education. Experiential Learning Credit gives current for their professionally acquired knowledge and allows them to maximize the value of our programming, while maintaining academic rigor.

Provide Flexibility of Programming to Enable Students to Complete of their Education Goals

The majority of our programs are solely or concurrently offered online to allow students maximum scheduling flexibility. This is attractive to both traditional and nontraditional students and allows for marketing and enrollment opportunities for our programs beyond local and regional students.

GOAL #2 – Create Opportunities to Succeed

Continued Responsiveness to Market Forces

Our programs regularly adjust to ensure that they provide students with the knowledge necessary to capitalize on career opportunities and maximize their career advancement. We also utilize the incubation of new programs to respond to needs in the marketplace and ensure that every student has the opportunity to be at the forefront of the market in their chosen profession. In the last five years we have developed the following programs in response to market needs: Child Development & Family Studies (CDFS) with 5 concentrations under the heading; Merchandising (MRCH) with two concentrations under the heading; Commercial Aviation; Urban Studies; and Emergency Management.

Build Relevant Skills Development

Whenever possible, industry relevant credentials are embedded into program curriculums to maintain and increase marketability of our students and our program. Our college ensures that our faculty are up to date on current industry practices and information through providing access to continuing education and professional opportunities to our fulltime faculty, and through heavy reliance on current practitioners for adjunct faculty.

Individualized Programming and Responsiveness to Student Needs

Our students may take advantage of a wide array of degree customization such as prior learning credit, Experiential Learning Credit, and the incorporation of a student's unique skills, knowledge, and interest through programs such as Design Your Own Major. Such flexibility in both our destination and innovative programming enables us to meet students where they are and help them reach towards where they want to be. The variety of programs also allows us to respond to the diversity of student needs; providing detailed, personalized advising, scheduling, and assistance to those who benefit from more support while allowing high performing students the ability to independently work through their degree.

GOAL #3 – Outcomes Focused Academics

Grow and Preserve our Reputation for Academic Rigor

Continuing to grow and preserve our college's learning environment, in which each student is supported in our expectation that they will be learning at heightened levels of academic material and can demonstrate corresponding proficiency in those materials. Through sharing and reviewing current student and community partner feedback with our faculty, we can ensure our programs are kept to the highest standard. We can recognize our students with additional needs and provide them with the academic, economic, and social supports necessary for them to find success without compromising the thoroughness of our pedagogical approach.

Ensure Employability and Marketability of Skills Focus

Successful outcomes for our college are determined not just by numbers of graduates but by the career opportunities and advancement that our graduates achieve through the knowledge and skills gained. Ensure this success through embedding industry relevant certifications into our programming and providing our faculty with access to resources necessary to remain current on market trends and knowledge.

Focus on Innovation

We continue to recognize new opportunities for programs that will satisfy shifting market needs, and to give those programs a supportive environment to develop and then to transition these innovative programs into appropriate colleges in order to advance the University goals and to enhance collaborative efforts across the University as a whole. As exemplified through our incubation program over just the last ten years we have successfully transitioned Health Services Administration to Health Care Leadership in the College of Health Sciences, Fashion Design/Fashion Merchandising to Department of Art/College of Communication & Fine Arts, Dance Education to Department of Theatre & Dance/College of Communication & Fine Arts, and helped transition an Entrepreneurship minor to the Fogelman College of Business and Economics. We also have two additional programs, Music & Entertainment which will be moving to College of Communication and Fine Arts and Religious Studies which will be moving to the College of Arts and Sciences, over the next academic year.

In the last five years we have created new programming in Liberal Studies, Commercial Aviation, Aviation Human Factors, Urban Studies, Emergency Management in response to market demands and, when appropriate, will transition these programs to corresponding colleges across campus.

GOAL #4 – Strengthen Research Enterprise

Engage in Cross-College Collaboration

Through development of relationships, both in recognition of our incubation capacity for development of new programming, and through diversified student interests through the Design Your Own Major undergraduate program and our Liberal Studies graduate offerings, our college will continue to be open to collaborative efforts with research focused colleges across campus. Our Legal Studies program demonstrates this as we share ideas and experiential learning opportunities with Cecil C. Humphrey's School of Law, through the development of the successful 3+3 program, and through collaboration with other programming throughout the University that attracts students interested in a role in the legal profession, such as Criminal Justice, Philosophy, and History.

Maintain & Grow Our DLS Program

In 2018, we started the Doctor of Liberal Studies (DLS) program with a single student enrolled. Since that time, this innovative, individualized doctoral program has grown by leaps and bounds. In December 2023, our fifth DLS graduate received his doctorate, we currently have 60+ students in the program with ninety percent of those students taking courses each semester. As only the third DLS program in the country, and the only one whose students may develop a completely online course of study, students at every level may pursue innovative, interdisciplinary projects in our college.

The College of Professional and Liberal Studies is extremely proud of our Doctor of Liberal Studies (DLS) and the high level of research they are producing. Since 2018, our DLS students have given more than fourteen conference presentations, published at least ten articles in peer-reviewed journals (including award winning work), and have at least an equal number of other publications including book chapters and work in conference proceedings.

DLS students are producing work on many varied subjects. Because of the unique structure of the DLS program at the University of Memphis, there is potential for students to work not only on subjects within the Humanities, but also across the breadth of academic disciplines. By developing relationships with professors across campus, doctoral students in the College of Professional and Liberal Studies have established themselves as some of the most creative and innovative students on campus.

Completed and Dissertations in progress include:

- A study of discrimination against Roma in modern Athens using personal interviews and insights from critical theory
- The effects of a homeowner preparation course on understanding homeownership in urban Memphis

- An examination of Southern Gothic literature as a means of understanding the tension between Christian thought and critical theory
- Survey and policy analysis of maternal health and family planning knowledge and access among Tennessee's refugee population
- A study of the popularity and influence of women's writings in colonial British America and the early United States.
- An examination of the Mothers' Board in three African-American denominations and how this organization has undergirded their churches.
- How using gender-preferred language in solicitation materials can better connect with readers and influence donation decisions
- The influence, practical effects, and ethics of the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act
- The culture of the Blues in creative non-fiction and photography
- How Trauma-Informed Education can curb the School-to-Prison Pipeline
- Community development through elementary school sports non-profits in Brazil
- Whether culturally competent college counseling can close the gap between the potential and achievement of Black students who attend private schools in the Mid-South

Identify and Develop Natural Partnerships

When applicable to our programs, and without compromising our college's mission and vision, we will continue to identify opportunities to innovate and develop partnerships within the University and with our community partnerships to maximize the development and implementation of research based pedagogical methods.

GOAL #5 – Recruit, Reward, and Recognize our People

Recognize and Reward our Current Faculty and Staff

Through regular feedback to faculty and staff with special attention shown to recognize reviews which exemplify excellence. Through opportunities for additional compensation based upon high enrollment and longevity, and for additional services to the college and University. Highlight new promotion structure for nontenure faculty and review and implement, if possible, leadership opportunities from within the college not based upon tenure requirement.

Recruit Fulltime Academic Leadership to Maximize Academic Rigor and Program Consistency

Engage in hiring practices which ensure that our departments are led by fulltime faculty who are committed to the highest standards of pedagogical performance. Recognizing the diversity of our student population we will strive to recruit academic leaders that reflect diverse viewpoints and identifying characteristics.

Continue Recruitment of Industry Engaged Adjuncts

In order to ensure that our students are given the opportunity to learn from current practitioners in order to gain current market relevant knowledge and to have the skills necessary to ensure their marketability in their chosen professions, we will continue to seek highly qualified adjuncts that are leaders in their fields.

GOAL #6 – Exemplify Operational Excellence

Identify and Engage with Students at their Level of Advising Need

To maximize our advising process operational efficiency, we will fully utilize and ensure faculty utilization of current reporting resources to identify students in need of additional supports while empowering more autonomous students to utilize available and burgeoning online and AI resources to self-schedule. Not every student needs, or wants, to have an appointment every semester. Train and encourage students to engage in major mapping and program-wide course selection in order to strengthen their dominion over their scholastic outcomes.

Empower Department Chairs to take Ownership of Administrative Tasks

Ensure that department chairs have authorization to administer all primary aspects of their programs and through training, empower them to utilize it. This will ensure Dean and Associate Dean are not required for all lower-level administrative tasks.

Identify and Implement Incubation for New Programs

Through relationship building and directed marketing we will continue to work closely with our community partners to identify new areas of need and to then develop and incubate new programming to meet those needs. We will ensure consistency with our college's mission and the needs of our student population, University, and community. This longstanding tradition which started with University College and now continues in our recently transitioned and newly developed programs will continue. However, we will implement new benchmarks in order to more efficiently track the growth and development of programs and identify appropriate final destination colleges, whenever possible, during the preliminary stages. If a program fails to meet these benchmarks, we will reevaluate its long-term viability and implement, when possible, changes to increase its marketability and enrollment.

GOAL #7 – Generate and Steward Financial Resources

Epitomize the Value of a College Education by being Operationally Efficient & Career Focused

Our career focused programming we will demonstrate that students will be able to monetize their degrees through immediate employability and career advancement. The primary focus of students, and their parents is the connection between the degree earned and their future earnings versus the cost of that education. By implementing marketing that highlights the effectiveness of our programs through demonstrating the high rates of employment for our graduates in their chosen fields, and of the career advancement of our graduates, we can increase general marketability of our students and our programs.

Our reliance adjunct faculty which both saves costs on continuing education as they are practitioners and keeps wage and benefit costs low in relation to cost per credit paid by the student while allowing our students to access to the most current information available by highly trained and respected members of their chosen professions. We also maintain low operational costs, when possible, through comparison shopping and cross-University collaboration to eliminate unnecessarily redundant expenditures. Continue promotion of our DLS program as those students are primarily self-funded which increases our college's profitability.

Grow and Develop Community Partnerships

Through utilizing current community partnerships and by being responsive to those community partners when developing new programming, we can maximize our students access to funding, and employment opportunities. This will benefit our current students as well as stabilize and increase enrollment. The primary focus of employers is the correlation between the knowledge earned in our programs and effective implementation of those skills in their businesses. Implement directed marketing, when appropriate, to current and prospective students and actively seek new partnerships. Encourage and develop relationships with local, regional, national, and international partners, in particular through growth of experiential learning opportunities which will highlight our programs and our students' abilities.

Promote Transfer Friendliness and Individualized Solutions to Student Success

We will continue to highlight transfer friendliness and commitment to finding individualized solutions to barriers to student success in order to maximize both traditional and nontraditional student perception of value of enrollment in our college. Adult, and nontraditional students, have lower financial need. Therefore, implementing directed marketing that highlights employment and career advancement opportunities to recruit more of these types of students and to increase general marketability of our students and our programs.