

Dickinson College Strategic Plan

This strategic plan is part of Dickinson Forward initiative announced by President John E. Jones III '77, P'11. For a year and a half, strategic planning committee members, with input from various constituencies across the institution, including faculty, staff, students, alumni and parents, developed this plan for Dickinson, a world-class college ready to take on the future.

Chartered in 1783 as the first college in the new nation, Dickinson was designed to provide a different kind of liberal-arts education. Our students would not just study theory; they would apply it. They would not just learn about the globe; they would travel it. We develop leaders with a broad understanding of the world and with an empathy earned through experience.





For 240 years, Dickinson's mission has remained the same: To provide a residential education in the liberal arts, notable for its ability to prepare our students to thrive as engaged citizens throughout their lives.

In recent years, the Dickinson academic experience has been transformed to meet the needs of a changing student body. Our current pedagogy is multi-faceted, emphasizing active learning through such aspects as individual and group research projects, team writing, peer review, multimedia projects, student-led discussions, case studies and performance in the arts. Learning experiences also extend beyond the classroom through a range of transformative field experiences. These practices effectively meet the needs of a student body that is increasingly diverse in backgrounds, skills and experiences.

Dickinson has developed an international reputation for our commitment to imbuing our students with an immersive global perspective, a holistic sustainability education, a community orientation and civic skillset, and the ability to think across disciplines and dialogue across differences. Through these interdependent dimensions of a Dickinson education, students are better able to connect their values to their career and civic goals. Our alumni are out in the world building more just, equitable, sustainable and prosperous communities.

However, we must respond to the critical challenges of our times. The world our students confront is changing rapidly and becoming ever more complex. Dickinson students differ from earlier generations in their life experiences, interests, needs, perspectives and skills. Students now acquire knowledge differently and come to us with growing expectations for services and systems to support their development—in the classroom and beyond. They and their families increasingly question the value of an undergraduate liberal-arts degree. As college costs have risen steadily beyond inflation, so too have expectations that we ensure student success in careers and in the larger world. Demonstrating value and satisfactorily meeting the related critical challenges will lead to increased net tuition revenue, which along with our endowment are the primary drivers of our operation.

This strategic plan focuses on our students—they are the center of all that we are and do—and on the steps we must take to meet their changing needs, helping them achieve success, now and in the future.

At the same time, we recognize the need for faculty and staff support, as they expertly deliver the world-class experience we provide. We know that none of these goals and aspirations can happen without our people who work every day to provide students with the highest quality experience and make decisions through the governance system that impact the future of the college. We must remain committed to providing the salary, benefits and sense of community that make Dickinson a desirable place to work.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are embedded across the plan. Our efforts to create a community that is underpinned by respectful dialogues across differences is central to our approach. We know these dialogues are critical to the survival of democracy, and we are hopeful we can be a model for the nation.

This plan describes our challenges and opportunities to excel in a rapidly changing higher-education landscape.



Our Goal: Provide students an education that is unsurpassed in its value and that prepares graduates for lives of purpose and success.

Changing demographics, fierce competition, tuition dependency and increasing skepticism about the value of a liberal-arts degree make it harder to attract students who will be the next generation of Dickinsonians, and to inspire and engage alumni. Add to that inflation, rising costs and a growing job market for those without a college degree and Dickinson finds itself facing significant headwinds.

Our Opportunity: Harnessing the tremendous expertise of our faculty, staff, alumni and family community, we will innovate and adjust to address the changing needs of our future students, while staying true to our liberal-arts core. The headwinds facing Dickinson are strong, but our collective talent and determination are stronger.

Bolded solutions indicate those actions we will undertake first.

CHALLENGE:

Showcase the value of a Dickinson education for prospective students and families.

SOLUTIONS:

- We will expand scholarships and financial aid to those who are not able to pay. We will continue to support and market the \$75 million Change a Life—Change the World scholarship campaign so that no deserving student is denied access to a transformative Dickinson education. Reducing the financial barriers for low-income families expands access, expands our reach and deepens the social impact of Dickinson.
- We will increase funding to enrollment and marketing to make sure Dickinson is well known in new and diverse geomarkets that are experiencing positive growth, as well as existing markets. We will increase outreach and programming for college counselors (key influencers in admissions decisions), expand prospective student programming and develop new enrollment pipelines.

CHALLENGE:

Ensure a vital and vibrant Dickinson community.

SOLUTIONS:

- We must renovate our student union to serve as the “campus living room.” The space must provide areas

to enhance social, artistic and intellectual engagement. Our dining facility must provide healthy, quality foods and a variety of options. These inclusive spaces will help to build community, enhance belonging and will be easier for students with different accessibility needs to navigate.

- **We must prioritize our Dialogues Across Differences initiative so that it is a fundamental part of the Dickinson experience.**
- We must prioritize student health needs. Integral to this effort, we will explore innovative community partnerships and virtual tools to help our students to flourish in all dimensions of wellness.
- We will recognize and further enable arts and athletics as key ways to challenge, enlighten and unite students, faculty and staff.
- We will update Dickinson's Climate Action Plan to chart a path for deeper reductions in emissions of greenhouse gas pollutants.
- We will carry out the Resilience Commitment recently signed by President Jones to assess climate change risks and resilience for the communities of Dickinson, Carlisle and Cumberland County. We will evaluate and prioritize options for building resilience.

CHALLENGE:

Further develop an innovative curriculum and co-curricular programs.

SOLUTIONS:

- **We will establish a Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning & Research to update and innovate our pedagogies. The center will enhance instructional innovation by keeping faculty aware of current issues, trends and evidence-based practices, including inclusive pedagogy; integrate technology for teaching and learning; and aid students. The new center will provide faculty with the resources to best facilitate learning, belonging and engagement for rural students, international students, students with disabilities and historically underrepresented students as they pursue their rigorous course of study.**
- We will provide focus and investment to make our academic program world-class, including investing in new academic programs. We will build on the work of the curriculum committee. We will consider expanding popular majors to meet student demand.
- We will strengthen deliberate linkages between classroom learning and career preparation, providing a variety of opportunities, including internships, research opportunities and service learning. (These are considered high impact practices.)
- We will advance a well-resourced and more modern structured approach to advising, one that ensures a high-caliber experience for both students and faculty. With a commitment to student success, this approach to advising will provide a stronger safety net for all learners—providing support to effectively navigate the curriculum, achieve equitable outcomes and increase retention.
- We will expand and enhance our internationally recognized global programs and potentially develop new audiences for those programs.
- We will prepare students for lives of purpose, success and action by making and articulating connections across Dickinson's strengths in global, sustainability, civic engagement, cross-disciplinarity and DEI.
- We will excel in our career preparation efforts, moving our approach to an industry/field-based model, with staff developing expertise and networking opportunities around career paths ranging from business, technology or communications to public service and sustainability. We will further engage alumni as key

players in this effort.

CHALLENGE:

Engage alumni and families to collaborate with students, faculty and staff.

SOLUTIONS:

- We will offer short- and long-term programs, classes and excursions that are academically challenging and personally rewarding to connect alums with each other, with faculty and with current students.
- We will develop capacity in volunteer talent management to take advantage of our alumni as leaders. This will include engaging and training alums to be part of the Dickinson team to increase their stake in the success of our initiatives and the college.
- We will bring alumni and families together with students to share expertise and to become an integral part of the campus community using the John M. Paz '78 Alumni & Family Center.

CHALLENGE:

Provide technology to serve students and anticipate future needs.

SOLUTIONS:

- We must advance the college's digital transformation, by modernizing our tech infrastructure and enterprise data systems, including our core student information, financial and human resource systems.
- We must allow for the transformational use of data to guide decision making and provide an intuitive digital experience for students, faculty and staff.
- We will educate the college community on inclusive technology practices and the use of assistive technology.

CHALLENGE:

Support our faculty and staff, without whom none of our success is possible, with competitive wages and benefits, as well as ancillary resources that allow them to excel in their work.

SOLUTIONS:

- We will work to address compensation concerns by tackling salary compression, salary competitiveness

and rising cost-of-living.

- We will also look to maintain and increase, where possible, a competitive benefits package, including retirement contributions and healthcare.
- We will develop strategies to recruit, retain and support a diverse community of faculty and staff.

This plan will continue to evolve as specific divisions outline the actions needed to meet these ambitious priorities and solutions set forth. We are in an era of rapid change, and we will meet the opportunities ahead, staying ever focused on our students and providing them the best experience possible. We must move quickly and decisively to take these steps, and to transform the Dickinson experience. We will do so collectively, in concert with our governance system, and in a way that is distinctive to Dickinson.

**College Leadership****Quick Facts**

PREVIOUS PLANS

- [Strategic Framework and Priorities 2018-21](#)
- [Strategic Plan III](#)

- [Strategic Plan II](#) (FY 2006-2010)
- [Strategic Plan I](#) (FY 2001-2005)



Dickinson Edge

