

THE ALLEGHENY COLLEGE PATHWAY



DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

August 25, 2023

PRESIDENT RON COLE '87, PH.D.



A PATHWAY *for* ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

Allegheny College was founded in 1815 to provide access to a transformative education in Meadville and since that time, the College has become a national leader for academic excellence with strong outcomes delivered by outstanding faculty and staff who excel as teachers and mentors. The Allegheny College Board of Trustees, in February 2023, [endorsed a pathway](#) to chart a vibrant future for the College that firmly establishes our place as a preeminent liberal arts college as we evolve to meet the needs of students today and tomorrow.

Through our process to develop a pathway for Allegheny we have clarified compounding internal and external challenges to our future. Internally, we have experienced enrollment declines and decreasing revenue as costs continue to grow. And, our investments have lagged in programs and infrastructure that would enhance the student experience, bolster outcomes, and improve operations.

Externally, data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education shows a decline among recent high school graduates attending college. In addition, the National Center for Education Statistics projects a significant decrease in the number of high school graduates in Pennsylvania and other states in the Midwest and Northeast. These trends increase the competitive pressure in these saturated regions for student recruitment. At the same time, the public narrative about the value of a college education has become increasingly focused on vocation and cost, requiring us to boldly articulate and prove the value of our educational promise in a changing environment.

Collectively, the internal and external factors affecting Allegheny should be viewed as opportunities to be innovative and bold in our work. The pathway that we design for the College needs to build upon our academic excellence grounded in the traditions and values of the liberal arts, diversify the education that we deliver, and broaden the students we serve. Through this process we will refine and fulfill our mission in new and distinctive ways with relevance into the 21st century. We will graduate students with extraordinary outcomes who exemplify the transformative experience of a liberal arts education and turn their passions into purpose for meaningful lives and careers. We will be bold in realizing an ambitious plan for a strong Allegheny College into the future.

MISSION, VISION, *and* VALUES

A mission statement defines the ‘why’ of an organization and builds alignment around shared purpose. A vision statement is aspirational and projects what an organization will be. Both statements are ideally short, memorable, and inspirational. Values guide an organization; what do we hold ourselves accountable for? Combined, mission — vision — values, form the North Star for an organization, shaping decisions and outcomes.

[Allegheny’s Mission Statement](#) defines our purpose but also includes facets of what we do and how. We don’t currently have a vision statement or a set of declared values. Our [Statement of Community](#) describes values and commitments

that are important to our institution. Input from the Allegheny community throughout our strategic planning process has consistently highlighted the importance for us to sharpen our mission statement, to develop a vision statement, and to declare our values. The Hill Group has gathered and compiled extensive feedback about this from alumni, students, staff, faculty, and trustees. This draft of our strategic plan intentionally does not contain final versions of mission and vision statements; instead, listed below are common themes that arose from the Allegheny community. These will be used by the President and Board to craft new mission and vision statements *with further input from the campus community* during the public comment phase of the process.

THEMES TO SHAPE MISSION AND VISION:

- Academic excellence
- Access to education
- Interdisciplinary learning
(solve challenges from multiple perspectives)
- Intellectually curious students or curious minds
- Creative and critical thinking; communication skills
- Prepare students for lives and careers of purpose
- Moral and civic responsibility
- Sense of community; lifelong connections
- Allegheny is recognized and successful
- Alumni have enviable traits compared to their peers
- Positive impact on our communities

The following five value statements are the outcome of strong consistency from the Allegheny community throughout the planning process:

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE VALUES

1. EXCELLENCE

We believe in the pursuit of excellence in all that we do and commit to exceeding the expectations of all members of our academic community.

2. INNOVATION

We believe that creativity is the source of positive change and commit to empowering those who embrace a mindset for intellectual and personal growth.

3. INCLUSION

We believe that diverse perspectives enrich learning and we commit to promoting the free and respectful exchange of ideas in a setting that fosters responsibility and accountability.

4. COMMUNITY

We believe in the power of community and commit to nurturing lifelong relationships among students, alumni, faculty, and staff.

5. SUSTAINABILITY

We believe in a sustainable world for future generations and commit to this by stewarding environmental, economic, and social drivers.

These five values are core to Allegheny and will be fundamental to all we do at the College. They will not just be words, but ideals that celebrate our shared experience and shape our approach to being in community.

GOALS *and* STRATEGIES

Defining the Allegheny College Pathway

The three working groups provided a wealth of ideas for the steering committee to distill and build the following five goals with strategies that can be deployed to achieve the goals. Goals one and two build and enhance what we already do; goals three and four build new things for Allegheny; goal five is essential to most effectively achieve the other goals. Underpinning each strategy, but not included in this report, are sets of tactics (day-to-day operations) that would be implemented to realize the strategies and goals.

1. EVERY ALLEGHENY STUDENT WILL GAIN HIGH-QUALITY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES, ROOTED IN THE LIBERAL ARTS, THAT PREPARE THEM FOR MEANINGFUL LIVES AND PURPOSEFUL CAREERS IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

► STRATEGIES

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| 1.1 Strengthen existing and create new academic programs to emphasize academic excellence, applied learning, and the relevance of liberal arts for career readiness and meaningful lives | 1.4 Amplify our interdisciplinary philosophy and curriculum as a strategic differentiator to prepare students to connect, synthesize, and apply knowledge from diverse perspectives |
| 1.2 Build career and outcomes advising into all academic programs | 1.5 Engage alumni in ways that serve them and advance outcomes for students |
| 1.3 Deepen experiential learning options across the curriculum so students can apply knowledge and gain practical experience prior to graduation | 1.6 Implement systematic and sustained assessment processes for every program |

► OBJECTIVES

Measured objectives will include first destination and post-graduate surveys and program and institutional learning outcomes

2. A VIBRANT EXPERIENCE AND INCLUSIVE CULTURE WILL BE HALLMARKS OF ALLEGHENY FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

► STRATEGIES

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|---|---|
| 2.1 Enhance athletics, recreation, arts outside of the classroom, spiritual life and wellness, and fun student activities as engaging parts of the Allegheny experience | 2.3 Create high-tech, sustainable, welcoming, and accessible physical and operational infrastructure to enhance academics, residential life, dining, and wellness |
| 2.2 Define and create an aspirational, positive, and growth-minded campus culture to build community and school pride | |

► OBJECTIVES

Measured objectives will include student retention rates and surveys of student and employee experience

3. ALLEGHENY WILL DELIVER EDUCATIONAL CONTENT IN NEW AND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO REACH A BROADER AUDIENCE LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

► STRATEGIES

- 3.1 | Thoughtfully expand beyond the four-year undergraduate degree with graduate and non-degree programs to satisfy traditional and non-traditional student demands and to meet employer needs
- 3.2 | Enable widespread access to selected Allegheny programs and educational opportunities by leveraging best-in-class online technologies and practices to educate students regardless of location
- 3.3 | Implement partnerships with other institutions in strategic locations to sustainably expand opportunities for Allegheny students

► OBJECTIVES

Measured objectives will include enrollment trends and completion rates

4. ALLEGHENY WILL BE A PARTNER WITH AND SERVE THE GREATER MEADVILLE REGION

► STRATEGIES

- 4.1 | Establish a Community Partnership Hub as a resource for long-term improvements and sustained collaborative initiatives with community partners
- 4.2 | Grow capacity for community, workforce, and economic development
- 4.3 | Renew and expand relationships with Meadville and its multiple diverse communities

► OBJECTIVES

Measured objectives will include community impact score and growth of programs

5. ALLEGHENY WILL BE OPERATIONALLY EXCELLENT AND FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE TO THRIVE IN THE FUTURE

► STRATEGIES

- 5.1 | Strengthen marketing, communication, and branding to elevate the profile and distinctive position of Allegheny
- 5.2 | Grow enrollment by investing in student recruitment, retention, and persistence through a focus on inclusive excellence and holistic student success leading to strong outcomes
- 5.3 | Build and expand sources of revenue
- 5.4 | Improve efficiency and effectiveness in work processes to be student-centered and to bolster the employee experience
- 5.5 | Attract and retain a diverse team of the best and brightest faculty, staff, and administrators

► OBJECTIVES

Measured objectives will include enrollment and campaign metrics, operating margin, and surveys of student and employee experience

OUR PROCESS

Our strategic planning process has been ambitious and was designed to include broad and inclusive input from the Allegheny community. Please visit the [Strategic Planning website](#) for a timeline of the process along with summaries of involvement. Our process was facilitated by The Hill Group, a firm based in Pittsburgh with extensive experience and success guiding and implementing strategic planning in higher education and industry. Three working groups met in summer 2023 to review market research, internal data, and constituent surveys. The working groups were organized under the categories of ‘people’ (student experience, enrollment, and employee development), ‘programs’ (curricular and co-curricular), and ‘places’ (campus infrastructure and Meadville area partnerships), with members from faculty, staff, students, cabinet, and trustees. The process was designed to include broad input from the Allegheny community.

The working groups identified and shaped strategic initiatives informed by focus group findings and [market position research](#)

conducted by The Hill Group. The outcomes of the working groups were reviewed and prioritized by a steering committee. Initial goals and strategies were informed by campus-wide and alumni surveys along with focus groups and interviews with students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and leaders from the Meadville area. They were refined by the steering committee and fine-tuned by the Cabinet. The Board of Trustees reviewed and provided feedback in July and August on versions of the goals and strategies along with feedback on mission, vision, and value statements. Importantly the Board is aligned with the pathway that is being defined.

We are now in the public comment phase of our process during which the Allegheny community is invited to offer their feedback on the draft strategic plan—mission, vision, values, goals, and strategies. This input will be used to refine and shape the plan that the President will bring to the Board of Trustees in October for their final approval.

OUR VIBRANT FUTURE

The pathway for Allegheny is bright because of our community’s shared commitment to honoring our over 200 year history, and moving boldly into the future. Our boldness will show in our wisdom to embrace new ideas, our courage to implement change, and our discipline to stay the course as we assess, evaluate, and continually improve.

Allegheny College always has, and will continue to stay true to our founding mission of providing access to a transformative education. As a *community of excellence* we will evolve and *innovate* to meet the needs of today and tomorrow’s learners. Our commitments to *inclusion* and *sustainability* ensure we will thrive for another 200 years.

