

AUGSBURG UNIVERSITY - ACADEMIC PLAN 2025

[Click here to access the previous draft of the academic plan, v.1.0 \(Jan.2018\).](#)

[Click here for a summary of feedback to January 2018 \(v1\) draft.](#)

[Click here to offer feedback on v2 of the academic plan.](#)

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INTRODUCTION

Augsburg's Academic Plan 2025 takes shape within the university's broader strategic frameworks, its vision of becoming a new kind of student-centered, urban university, and the principles and commitments that shape Lutheran higher education in the 21st century. It offers strategic focus to guide priorities, decisions, and allocation of resources in a time of transformation and innovation in higher education.

The plan prioritizes—and seeks to strengthen—student-centered teaching and learning in an intentionally diverse urban community dedicated to the public, democratic mission of higher education. It is informed by a vision of liberal education that prepares students for purposeful lives. It is informed by a commitment to equity: to meeting the needs of students and communities; to developing marketable skills that create economic well-being; and to cultivating the conditions robust democratic societies require to thrive. It is held together by teaching and learning infused with commitments to vocational discernment, equity and justice, experiential learning, and community partnerships.

It challenges faculty and staff to embrace change and innovation—to reimagine our work so as to meet today's students—our students—where they are. It aims to strengthen support for faculty and staff, promote program quality, and deepen learning experiences at their most transformative. It calls for new capacities and transparency in academic decisions, aims to prioritize new investments in people, technology, and facilities, and envisions the academic structures, leadership, and administrative support required to support this institution's aspirations. It makes no effort to name everything that will require attention in the years ahead and leaves open the space we will require to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. It offers an invitational framework to guide investments of time, energy, and resources so that we can, working together, achieve the greatest impact both internally and externally.

The Provost will partner with academic leaders, Faculty Senate, and university leadership across institutional divisions to ensure the plan's successful implementation. Regular reporting and annual reviews will provide opportunities for assessment and adaptation to unforeseen opportunities and challenges. As Augsburg develops a new strategic plan to succeed Augsburg 2019, we anticipate deeper and more effective integration of the Academic Plan with strategic efforts in Enrollment Management and Finance, as well as as-yet-to-be-determined multi-year institutional initiatives.

DEFINING CONTEXTS

WHO WE ARE: MISSION AND IDENTITY

Augsburg University educates students to be informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers, and responsible leaders. The Augsburg experience is supported by an engaged community that is committed to intentional diversity in its life and work. An Augsburg education is defined by excellence in the liberal arts and professional studies, guided by the faith and values of the Lutheran church, and shaped by its urban and global settings.

LUTHERAN HIGHER EDUCATION: ROOTED AND OPEN

Augsburg's roots in a robust Lutheran theological tradition ground our shared commitments to educating a diverse mix of students, to engaging tensions and paradox in the pursuit of truth, to epistemological humility, and to considering questions that inform the full array of religious and secular wisdom traditions. Our commitments to service and justice are expressions of a tradition called to serve the neighbor, reduce suffering, oppose oppression, seek solidarity, and restore wholeness. We educate students to develop agency, to make choices informed by vocational discernment, and to use unique gifts in service to the greater good.

PUBLIC MISSION: EQUITY, JUSTICE, DEMOCRACY

In the Spring of 2018, Augsburg's Board of Regents endorsed a statement of commitment regarding equity that has profound implications for structure, practice, policy, and leadership at and beyond the institution:

We believe that education is the key to healthy, meaningful, and productive lives for individuals, as well as to the vibrancy of our democracy. Augsburg University is dedicated to achieving an educational experience free from the barriers of poverty, racism, and discrimination so that students can fully realize their unique gifts. Recognizing that higher education's democratic promise is compromised by systemic and systematic barriers to college access and completion, Augsburg is called to stand for equity in everything we do to fulfill our academic mission, serve our students, and engage our fellow citizens.

DEMANDS OF THE 21st CENTURY: INNOVATION, ADAPTATION, AND TRANSFORMATION

Throughout its history, Augsburg has demonstrated a remarkable capacity for resilience, adaptation, and innovation. As traditional models prove unsustainable, as the demographics for traditionally-aged students shift, and as new realities require new skills and lifelong learning, Augsburg must continue to evolve and transform if it is to thrive. To ensure institutional sustainability in this new environment, we must increase our capacity for mission-driven academic innovation; ensure that our rootedness in a particular tradition provides fertile ground for individuals from a broad array of traditions to thrive; prove ourselves willing to develop new structures, processes, and policies; and find new ways to align our distinctive strengths with the world's needs.

ACADEMIC PLAN VISION: WHAT WE ASPIRE TO BE

In ways deeply congruent with our mission, we seek to prepare an intentionally diverse mix of students in all of our programs not merely to adapt to a rapidly changing world but to change the world.

Academic Plan 2025

Augsburg's Academic Plan 2025 takes shape in a moment of convergence: in Fall 2017, we became Augsburg University, a symbolic recognition of the complex institution we have become and also opens new imaginative space for what we might be in the future. We created a "new geography" of academic leadership, repositioning the deans as leaders of the faculty and the academic program, with independent offices outside Academic Affairs. In Winter 2018, a new signature academic building, the Hagfors Center for Science, Business, and Religion, created the opportunity for our students to learn and study in a state-of-the-art facility designed to support learning in and beyond the classroom. While the building is a profound material expression of who we are, where we are, and what we value, it too opens up new imaginative space for what we might become as we respond to the principles--of interdisciplinary problem solving, of active and collaborative learning--that inform its design.

We are currently redesigning the general education core (the last change took effect in 2002) to reflect changes in our students, our faculty, and the world. As Lutheran colleges and universities are no longer staffed primarily by Lutherans serving Lutheran students, we have become participants in a national conversation about what Lutheran higher education will be in the 21st century. This too invites us to reflect on--and to some degree reimagine--who we have been and will be, and how our Lutheran identity will be expressed, into the future. Finally, as the 2017-18 year came to a close, the Board of Regents affirmed a statement committing Augsburg to leadership in the important work of our time regarding equity, justice, and democracy.

The plan is organized around three objectives:

1. Achieve strength, recognition, and leadership for deep, transformative student-centered teaching and learning for an intentionally diverse community;
2. Achieve quality and distinction in innovative signature programs that embody and express key Augsburg's distinctions while meeting the needs of our students, our region, and the world;
3. Strengthen academic structures, leadership, and administrative support

OBJECTIVE 1: Achieve strength, leadership, and recognition for deep, transformative student-centered teaching and learning for an intentionally diverse community**Why this matters:**

Augsburg's distinctive identity and market niche largely rests on our reputation and success in educating an intentionally diverse mix of undergraduate students. We are recognized locally and nationally for this work and for how we live out, in practice, our commitments to equity, justice, and democracy. Our urban location further positions us as an institution of choice for accomplished teacher-scholar and teacher-practitioner faculty dedicated to undergraduate teaching. Demographic projections indicate that future growth in traditionally-aged undergraduate students will be in students of color. We can anticipate growth in adult degree-completion, regional graduate programs, and other professional certifications and credentials among the diverse students we educate. We can also anticipate steep competition for these students in the decades ahead. We have an opportunity to strengthen our distinction for quality and leadership in teaching diverse students in all of our programs even as the competition for them becomes increasingly fierce—it is an opportunity that will help secure a strong footing for the future.

Goals and Initiatives

- 1.1 Secure and strengthen Augsburg's distinction as a private urban university of choice for an intentionally diverse mix of students across all of our programs: undergraduate, adult degree-completion, graduate, and continuing education
 - Achieve greater diversity in the faculty, staff, and administration—deepening inclusive practices that cultivate a culture of equity, transformative learning, and belonging (as measured by success in hiring and retention of diverse employees)
 - Infuse diverse perspectives across the curriculum, in programs as well as in courses, and in ways that deepen student learning outcomes (as measured by course, program, and institutional assessments as well as career success)
 - Identify, refine, and strengthen curricular practices that are demonstrably effective in advancing commitments to equity, democratic agency, and community partnerships (as measured through program and institutional assessments)
 - Achieve market distinction learning environments across various modalities and pedagogies that meet the needs of our intentionally diverse mix of students in graduate programs (as measured by growth and vitality in graduate offerings; as measured by career/workforce outcomes)
 - Strengthen mentorship and advising of students across different cultures, traditions, and generations
 - Support, build, and enhance leadership in equity work, in higher education and in the community, among both faculty and staff

- 1.2 Invest in faculty expertise and development in ways that advance institutional mission, priorities, and distinction
 - Hire, support, and retain faculty with demonstrated commitments to innovation within and beyond their discipline that align with Augsburg's public mission
 - Redesign mentoring for new and junior faculty, focusing on early-career vocational discernment in our institutional contexts
 - Cultivate new strength, flexibility, and innovation in technology-enhanced pedagogies, course structures, and program models across the full range of modalities (face-to-face, blended, low-residency, accelerated, online)
 - Promote, make visible, and reward success in teaching diverse students, as measured by assessment, student success metrics, student perceptions, and peer review
 - Develop incentives to engage faculty in integrating teaching with community-based projects and initiatives that both foster deep transformative learning and advance Augsburg's public mission and distinction
 - Draw upon and use the aspirations and vision of the Hagfors Center as a catalyst for innovation, interdisciplinary connections, and integrative learning

OBJECTIVE 2: Promote quality and innovation in signature programs that express Augsburg's distinctive identity and respond to the needs of our students, our region, and the world

Why this matters:

Without quality programs aligned with mission and market that respond to the educational needs of students and intellectually (as well as creatively) engage the faculty, Augsburg cannot thrive or advance the public good in the Twin Cities or beyond. Our era requires Augsburg's unique gifts: the tradition that informs our work underpins and supports the development of a rich array of capacities in the context of 21st century realities.

Goals and Initiatives

- 2.1 Identify and invest in signature programs - distinctive, high-quality mission-driven, and market-sensitive programs that meet students where they are, use or develop innovative experiential pedagogies, prepare students for success, and respond to regional workforce needs
 - Develop, and incorporate into periodic program review, key metrics to position programs, on 7 year horizons, for (1) growth and investment, (2) maintenance, (3) restructuring, or (4) retirement
 - Refine and strengthen program-level assessment of student learning that maps to institutional outcomes; use assessments results to identify and invest in high-performing signature programs
 - Leverage multi-year initiatives in the next strategic plan to advance community-engaged teaching, experiential learning, and public scholarship

- 2.2 Invest in at least three new market-responsive and mission-centric programs (or expansions of existing programs) with significant new net-revenue growth potential
 - Deepen collaboration across Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Finance
 - Rethink, rebrand, and develop new strategies for growing Augsburg in Rochester in ways that respond to local workforce needs while creating space for innovation specific to the Rochester community
 - Rethink, rebrand, and develop new strategies for growing Augsburg's degree-completion Program for working adults, with programs, structures, and policies that appeal to prospective students and meet regional workforce needs
 - Explore opportunities in continuing education and alternative credentialing for working adults

OBJECTIVE 3: Improve academic structures, leadership, and support

Why this matters:

Without the support and tools appropriate to 21st century higher education, faculty and staff must devote time energy to managing details, sometimes in redundant ways, rather than to providing the best learning experiences for students. Without greater transparency around decision making and processes, the fewer opportunities we will have to benefit from the ideas, perceptions, and wisdom faculty and staff bring to difficult decisions. Without academic leaders who possess the skills, capacities, understandings of faculty and programs—or the shared and reliable data that informs sound decisions—we are inefficient at best and ill-informed at worst—all of which leads to challenges around communication, redundancy, lack of transparency, distrust, silos, compartmentalization, and conflict.

Goals and Initiatives

- 3.1 Create new university structures to support quality, advance distinction, and cultivate innovation
 - Develop and implement a new academic footprint that expresses, internally and externally, the complex institution we've become: a College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (emphasizing breadth at the u.g. level), a School (or schools) of Professional Studies (emphasizing more focused study), and appropriate structures (tbd) to strengthen graduate programs, programs for working adults (adult-degree completion, and non-degree continuing education/studies)
 - Combine academic departments when possible so that no one department has fewer than 5 full-time faculty
 - Realign faculty governance with new structures (curricular committees, etc)
 - Evolve and elevate the department chair as academic leader, with expectation that most will serve two 3-year terms

- Create new associate dean (or equivalent) roles, 3-year renewable appointments held by faculty, with anticipated terms of 6+ years
- 3.2 Invest in new tools, technologies, and data analytics to support academic decisions
 - Launch a “curricular parameters” initiative to develop shared and transparent understandings of faculty workload (instructional as well as holistic) across different roles and appointment types, divisions, and programs, as well as optimal course caps relative to discipline and pedagogy, weight in faculty instructional load (of “non-standard” course types)
 - Set and achieve equitable faculty salary benchmarks and proportionality goals appropriate to the discipline, program, degree, and workload (role/responsibilities)
 - Work with OPE on key enterprise metrics to be shared by departments, programs, academic leaders, and others
 - Implement Watermark (TaskStream) software to support assessment of student learning and program accreditations (2018-2021)
 - Migrate the tenure and promotion process from Moodle to Google, with guidelines on portfolio structure and length
- 3.3 Ensure that administrative (or technical) staff support, whether dedicated or shared, is equitably distributed across departments and programs
- 3.4 Deepen partnerships, alignments, and integration between Academic Affairs and University offices, fostering strong cross-divisional relationships, accountability, and efficiency.