



Highlands College

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL, BUT THE WORKERS ARE FEW. —Luke 10:2



Highlands College is answering the heart cry of Jesus in Luke 10:2. Our calling is to develop students into leaders . . . leaders that are prepared to bring in the harvest. Our mission at Highlands College is to reach a lost and broken world with the Good News of Jesus. Achieving that impact requires us to invest in the future, to invest in young people, and to invest in education. We have been making such investments at Highlands College for over a decade, beginning with a small church internship program that has blossomed into a thriving, two-year college, training more than 1,000 students across all of our programs.

We are now ready to make a much bigger investment in the future and in young people. Our 2021 – 2025 Strategic Plan heralds a bold vision for Highlands College to transform ministry training with a focus on leadership, emphasizing the development of the whole person—not just the head, but also the hands, the heart, and cultivation of the Holy Spirit within. Our plan is to enhance and expand our current program, creating an immersive, accredited, baccalaureate program that holistically and practically trains ministry leaders—an Academy that will train 1,000 of the best and brightest students to answer their calling to lead lives of eternal impact. Habakkuk 2 implores us to “Write my answer

plainly on tablets, so that a runner can carry the correct message to others. This vision is for a future time. It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled.” With our Strategic Plan we have followed the instruction of God’s word to clarify our vision for all by writing it and making it plain. Our sincere hope is that our plan may inspire others to carry the correct message to others. And most importantly, our prayer is that our vision will be fulfilled at its future time.

Our Strategic Plan includes a mission, vision, and goals that are woven together by eight themes. The mission defines our purpose. The vision describes our aspiration 10+ years in the future. The seven goals describe our most important priorities for the next five years that will best position us to achieve our vision. The eight themes describe elements that apply to most or all goals and are essential to goal attainment. These four components—mission, vision, goals and themes—provide the framework for our strategic plan. While our plan’s duration is five years, we pray that our plan’s impact is eternal. We pray that all who read the plan will join us in our journey to create a ministry leadership program that births leaders who will lead, amplify, and accelerate the Great Commission to spread the Gospel and make “disciples of all nations.”

MISSION

Highlands College is a biblical higher education institution that exists to supply the Church with leaders of competence, character, and spiritual maturity, holistically trained to lead lives of eternal impact by fulfilling the Great Commission.

Highlands College’s mission describes our primary purpose. Our mission statement begins with our declaration that we are a Bible College, which means that we prepare students for ministry based on the Bible and biblical principles of growth and leadership. Our specific focus is on leadership, which is needed to efficiently and effectively scale the efforts of the Church to spread the Gospel. Leadership necessitates a focus on the whole person, which requires holistic training. Accordingly, our training not only stresses academic instruction and ministry training, but also character formation and spiritual development, with a goal of producing ministry leaders of competence, character, and spiritual maturity.

Our approach is immersive, meaning our program is highly structured, residential, and is situated in a church setting. Our approach is also pragmatic, with students receiving 400 hours of hands-on training in one of eight practicums. Additional hands-on training occurs each Sunday in the local church where students produce and facilitate engaging and dynamic worship services and experiences.

All of this training is provided to prepare our students to fulfill the Great Commission, which is best expressed in Matthew 28:16-20. Before ascending to Heaven from a mountain in Galilee, Jesus charged his apostles to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you.” This command from Jesus applies to all of his followers, who are instructed to embrace an evangelistic mission to make disciples of others, the results of which are seen in eternity. In leading others to fulfill this mission, our graduates are living lives of eternal impact. And in living such lives, they are fulfilling the mission of Highlands College.

Highlands College’s mission defines our purpose.

Highlands College is a biblical higher education institution that exists to supply the Church with leaders of competence, character, and spiritual maturity, holistically trained to lead lives of eternal impact by fulfilling the Great Commission.

Highlands College’s vision describes our aspiration for Highlands College 10+ years in the future.

To create a ministry academy model, applying leading-edge methods in world-class facilities, where students graduate debt-free—educated, equipped, and empowered to expand the Kingdom of God in a complex and changing world.

VISION

To create a ministry Academy model, applying leading-edge methods in world-class facilities, where students graduate debt-free—educated, equipped, and empowered to expand the Kingdom of God in a complex and changing world.

Our vision describes our aspiration for Highlands College 10+ years in the future. Our vision is intentionally bold and ambitious. We believe that biblical higher education needs to be profoundly refreshed to better prepare leaders for the challenges, and more importantly the opportunities, of an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world. At Highlands College, we intend to lead the way in reimagining biblical higher education. Our goal is to provide training to the best and brightest who feel a calling to the ministry so they may realize their full eternal potential.

We realize that fundamentally different thinking about ministry training is needed. We have studied numerous educational models and found the example of the military service academies most appropriate for Highlands College for many reasons, such as their emphasis on the whole person . . . on character . . . on leadership . . . on practical, immersive, and holistic training . . . and on virtues such as integrity and discipline. Our leadership model is translating many applicable elements of the military service academies to ministry training. This means that students will be pushed hard in a structured environment that transforms young women and men into strong and mature leaders.

We also recognize that our Academy model of leadership development must be enabled by leading-edge methods situated in world-class facilities. To implement these methods, we are adopting the best practices of successful institutions of higher education and developing a campus to include facilities and spaces that support these practices.



A key goal of our vision is for our graduates to graduate debt-free. To that end, we will eventually provide free tuition to all students and additional financial aid based on need. We will make every effort to keep the Highlands College experience accessible and affordable for all, and we are committed to 100% placement opportunities for all our graduates.

Ultimately, we aspire for our graduates to be “educated, equipped, and empowered to expand the Kingdom of God.” This means that our graduates must not only be passionate, but also thoroughly educated (i.e., biblically literate and church-system savvy) and practically trained—possessing the indispensable relational and technical skills needed to lead ministries, create essential environments and experiences like baptisms and weddings, and pastor people. They must also demonstrate the emotional maturity that results from a strong character and the spiritual maturity that results from a deep and personal relationship with God.

GOALS

STRENGTHEN THE FOUR PILLARS OF MINISTRY LEADERSHIP.

Enhance our current ministry leadership program through a more engaging and culturally aware academic curriculum, increased geographically and contextually varied hands-on ministry opportunities, expanded character development activities, and richer spiritual growth environments, so that our graduates are fully prepared to reach a complex and diverse world with the love of Christ.

TRANSITION TO ACADEMY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

MODEL. Transition to an immersive Academy model—offering an accredited, baccalaureate, on-campus program rooted in innovative and relational methodologies—producing leaders who are prepared to fulfill the mission of the Church.

DEVELOP STUDENT SERVICES THAT PROPEL SUCCESS. Recruit students with the highest potential and guide them through a distinct and inspiring student experience designed to nurture them with intentional student life programs, to place graduates in right-fit job opportunities, and to cultivate an alumni community that supports graduates throughout their lives.

EXPAND EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS. Maximize the impact of Highlands College by expanding our top-quality, accessible leadership programs and resources to develop and deploy adult ministry and marketplace leaders who are biblically informed, practically empowered, and spiritually strengthened.

ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION-DRIVEN OPERATING MODEL.

To expand and deepen Highlands College’s execution skills through leadership development, increased emphasis on work planning, collaboration, clear definition of roles, strategic sourcing of functions, strengthened implementation processes and capabilities, better performance and change management, and improved governance.

BUILD A WORLD-CLASS TRAINING GROUND FOR WORLD-CHANGING LEADERS.

Create an unparalleled state-of-the-art residential campus—emphasizing innovation, technology, active immersive learning, and collaborative environments—that stimulates creativity, engagement, and spiritual growth.

FUND THE FUTURE. Secure needed funding by expanding and deepening relationships with supporters, churches, foundations, alumni, and parents, and by exploring additional revenue sources to successfully launch students debt-free to fulfill their ministry calling.

“There is no greater investment in the world than into a leader that will impact tens of thousands of people the rest of their lives.”

—Chris Hodges, Highlands College Chancellor

THEMES

Highlands College’s Strategic Plan incorporates eight themes that apply to all goals. The themes address foundational elements essential to accomplishing our mission and vision.

DEPENDENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT. *Depend on the Holy Spirit—trusting in His wisdom, provision, and guidance—to ensure we develop life-giving leaders who are spiritually attuned and emotionally healthy.*

Jesus informed his apostles that while he would not be with them, he would send an advocate, the Holy Spirit—a gift from God to guide us and assist us to accomplish more than we can alone. Acts 1:8 instructs, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you,” and 2 Corinthians 3:17 teaches, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” Highlands College abides by a deep and institutionalized belief that the Person of the Holy Spirit must guide us in every action. This invitation of the Holy Spirit is holistically cultivated. The Holy Spirit must be demonstrated; staff and faculty must walk with Him. Spirit-led actions are foundational to a Highlands College culture of freedom, inspiration, and empowerment. The power of the Holy Spirit also undergirds spiritual and emotional well-being in our staff, faculty, and students, which leads to identification, understanding, and utilization of our spiritual gifts. And it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we liberate those who are oppressed in the world.

HIGHLANDS COLLEGE FAMILY. *Preserve and build upon Highlands College’s deeply relational family spirit—characterized by enthusiasm, commitment, generosity, perseverance, creativity, flexibility, and mutual support.*

Everyone deserves a loving and caring group of people they can call family. At Highlands College, we develop kinship through a shared set of Christian beliefs and values. Our culture is familial and relational; we depend on each other. The importance of a human touch is foundational to everything we do. Our family spirit is about love, support, respect, and enthusiasm, but also about high expectations, commitment, discipline, and hard work. We strive to be elite without being elitist. At Highlands College, we create a caring and compassionate community for Christ that cultivates the ministry leadership calling in our students so that they may lead lives of eternal impact.

Spirit-led actions are foundational to a Highlands College culture of freedom, inspiration, and empowerment.

ONE HEART. ONE MIND. *Passionately pursue God’s call for unity of heart and mind as a diverse faculty, staff, and student community developing the next generation of ministry leaders who can thrive in varied cultures, loving others as God loves us.*

At Highlands College, we respect the fundamental God-given dignity of all human beings. We recognize, appreciate, and value people from different cultures and backgrounds, and understand that different perspectives can result in better solutions and a richer, more enlightening college experience. Our complex and changing world creates challenges for ministry leaders, but also rich opportunities in the harvest field. We are committed to fostering a diverse environment that helps us sharpen our students’ cultural awareness and competence. This ability to relate to and reach others different from us is critical to our mission of making disciples of the many and different peoples of the world. Most importantly, we must always remember that what unites us—the love of Jesus and love for each other—is stronger than what might divide us. We must always remember Jesus’s charge to us: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35).

ELEVATED COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING. *Elevate communications and marketing to an institutional priority to advance visibility and reach; set strategic goals in student and faculty recruitment, fundraising, partnership development, and placement.*

Communications and Marketing (C&M) must align with and support our strategic plan. Accordingly, we are committed to making sustained investment in a centralized C&M function that maintains C&M discipline, arming the Highlands College family—all College ambassadors—with the latest messaging and training. Through a deeper understanding of the market landscape and the needs of priority audiences, C&M is implementing a more segmented messaging approach, with an emphasis on accessibility through language, diversified platform selection, rich storytelling, and personalization. We are also refining the Highlands College and associated Impact branding to be more differentiated and deliberate, with strong emphasis on a college look-and-feel. We are broadening our scope to reach new audiences through a proactive media strategy, increased advertising spend, leveraging our distinct thought leadership content, and connecting with and using the trusted voices of influencers—always committed to leveraging Church of the Highlands’ visibility and reputation, while building and maintaining a distinct identity. We are amplifying our effectiveness by maximizing technology, including increased and better data capture, research, and analysis to measure our effectiveness and adapt our tactics.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE. *Assure operational excellence, characterized by well-defined objectives; deploy a continuous multi-level process of measurement and analysis; expect strict accountability, so that team, financial, and physical resources are effectively and efficiently stewarded.*

Highlands College is committed to achieving operational excellence, finding the optimal balance between quality outcomes and low cost, to responsibly steward God’s gifts to us. Operational excellence begins with setting meaningful, objective, and measurable goals. To support these goals, we develop clear, tangible, and simple metrics, and set aggressive, but reasonable, targets for these metrics. We continuously track and analyze our progress. Honest, transparent, and informative reporting drives decision-making. We use metric tracking and reporting to ensure accountability and both team and individual ownership of success, as well as to recognize and reward achievement. We enable accountability and success through empowering our team. And we look everywhere for best practices that facilitate improvement.

STRONG, DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH CHURCH OF THE HIGHLANDS. *Remain immersed in the ministry and life of Church of the Highlands while always focused and cognizant that we are building a distinct collegiate culture.*

Church of the Highlands has been incredibly generous to Highlands College, putting us on solid structural and financial footing. Our Church relationship is a huge strength that we are committed to fully leveraging. We are working to strike the right balance in the Church-College partnership, with a thoughtful shift

toward the College creating its own ecosystem and identity. This involves finding the right level of autonomy, clarifying lines of authority, and streamlining decision-making, including evaluating governance. Some Church-provided functions will likely migrate to the College. The College must maintain close alignment with Church theology. We will seek ways for the Church to more effectively exert its influence to catalyze the College vision, understanding Highlands College must increasingly establish its own sphere of influence.

IMPACTFUL SERVICE. *To be a productive and contributing member to our community, state, and nation, reflecting God's love through meaningful engagement and impactful service.*

1 Peter 4:10 instructs, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." From day one, Highlands College raises up leaders who influence and serve outside of the walls of the gathered church. We are using our relationships with community influencers to amplify our impact and be a good neighbor. And we are more deeply incorporating outreach into our curriculum through service-based learning. This includes greater emphasis on practical experiences that extend beyond Sunday services and immerse us in our community, where students learn how to identify and address societal needs. We will build the College's identity for generosity through College-centered Serve Days. This community service provides rich opportunities for sharing the Gospel.

AMPLIFIED IMPACT THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS. *Identify, cultivate, and maximize diverse collaborations and partnerships with organizations to accelerate and amplify our impact to advance the Kingdom of God.*

The call to build the Kingdom of God is urgent. We are living in the most opportunity-rich time in history. The greatest need is now. Highlands College's partnerships are playing an increasingly important role in accelerating and amplifying our impact. We can do more together. We are casting a wide partner net. Our most important partner criteria are values/objectives alignment and the ability to leverage respective capabilities. We are looking outside Church of the Highlands and even globally to find excellent partners, to include: ARC and Grow, other churches, and para-ministry bodies; the business community; secular entities; other like-minded/spirited educational institutions; and philanthropic organizations. ARC, the Association of Related Churches, has a mission to provide support, guidance, and resources to launch churches. To date, ARC has helped plant 910 churches. Our objective is to become an adept practitioner of collaborative engagement, developing deep, long-lasting and valuable partnerships, including public-private partnerships. Grow is a network of over 14,500 churches that was started by Church of the Highlands to provide tools, training, resources, and events to network churches to help them achieve their full growth potential so they can reach their cities for Jesus.

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GOAL 1

STRENGTHEN THE FOUR PILLARS OF MINISTRY LEADERSHIP. *Enhance our current ministry leadership program through a more engaging and culturally aware academic curriculum, increased geographically and contextually varied hands-on ministry opportunities, expanded character development activities, and richer spiritual growth environments, so that our graduates are fully prepared to reach a complex and diverse world with the love of Christ.*

Highlands College's key differentiator is holistic, hands-on training that occurs in a church setting. Our whole-person ministry leadership program is organized into four pillars: Academic Instruction, Ministry Training, Character Formation, and Spiritual Development. Our four-pillar program is designed to achieve Highlands College's Student Learning Objectives:

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The graduates of Highlands College will be known for their commitment to:

1. The Authority of Scripture – as evidenced by
 - a. The knowledge, interpretation, and integration of the Scripture
 - b. The possession of a biblical worldview
2. The Pursuit of a Christ-Centered Life – as evidenced by:
 - a. A personal devotional life with God
 - b. A Godly character
 - c. A healthy, active lifestyle
 - d. An investment in life-giving relationships
3. The Passion of Lifelong Learning – as evidenced by
 - a. Intentional pursuit of truth
 - b. Creative problem solving
4. The Calling of Ministry Leadership – as evidenced by
 - a. The discovery of and devotion to personal calling
 - b. The development of leadership and vocational skills
5. The Advancement of the Kingdom – as evidenced by
 - a. Service to the local and the global Church
 - b. Stewardship of time and resources
 - c. Commitment to finishing well

PILLAR 1: ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION. We are raising academic standards, including revising our curriculum, in tandem with increasing admissions standards (discussed under Recruitment in Goal 3). To accomplish this, we are adopting best practices from other colleges. With the help of technology, we are shifting from lecture-based learning to active learning, to include more debate and discussion and more collaboration/team-based learning; the addition of flipped classrooms, where appropriate; simulations; and service learning. We are also committed to making academic instruction more practical, with increasing emphasis on basic job and technology skills—e.g., spreadsheet use and budgeting basics. To verify that we are successfully raising academic standards, we audit student performance and gather student feedback.

PILLAR 2: MINISTRY TRAINING CONSISTS OF TWO PARTS—MINISTRY LEADERSHIP CLASSES AND PRACTICUMS. Ministry Leadership teaches church principles, systems, and functions and how they all fit together. Improvements to our Ministry Training are currently focused on the College’s eight practicums, which provide 400 hours of hands-on training, allowing students to become specialized in a specific area of ministry. Students have 8 areas of study to choose from: Creative, Family Ministry, Conference and Events, Students, Pastoral Leadership, Worship Leadership, Technical Arts, and Outreach. Students learn and practice in classroom and lab settings and then apply these skills at live Sunday church services—also known as Sunday Serve. Our current emphasis is on revising our programs to better accommodate the needs of churches, based on focus groups with church leaders and feedback from students/alumni. A key objective is cultural competence, where we acclimate students to varied church and geographic cultures, so that they can effectively relate to and lead diverse team members.

We are creating more organized, specific, and substantive practicum plans, inclusive of assessments and grading rubrics. Our goal is to eliminate repetition and busy work, with the intent of creating a robust set of benchmarks that must be completed to earn credit. We are also working to provide more time and tools to help students choose a practicum; to provide more practicum cross-training; and to create more of a sense of community within practicums. As our College grows, we will need to increase practicum staffing to ensure instructors can accommodate new and expanded practicum requirements. Lastly, we are working to better define the roles of students vs. non-student church members on the Sunday Serve Dreams Teams.

PILLAR 3: CHARACTER FORMATION EMPHASIZES INSTILLING GODLY CHARACTER IN OUR STUDENTS. Throughout their time at Highlands College, students are challenged to grow in Christ-like character, in righteousness, love, wisdom, truth, and self-control. It is our goal that students graduate pursuing a Christ-centered life, including having a Godly character. To this end, Highlands College challenges students to the highest levels of academic integrity and requires participation in annual activities, such as Expedition and the Half Marathon, to develop perseverance towards achieving goals. Our holistic approach to student development incorporates athletics, both competitive and individual, and residential housing where students learn to live and love in community. We seek to develop students who are intellectually curious and honest, have discernment and integrity, and possess the courage, tenacity, and faithfulness to live a Christ-focused life. We are rounding out Character Formation with additional activities and events—many of which will be College-specific community service events and activities that provide ministering opportunities. Most importantly, we are ensuring character development is consciously incorporated into all aspects of the Highlands College experience.

“As an institution of higher education built in a moment in time where the sector is demanding innovation, we are rethinking everything about how our students learn.”

—Mark Pettus, Highlands College President



PILLAR 4: SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IS FOCUSED ON SPIRITUAL MATURITY, ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES, WITH CHAPEL BEING THE MOST INTENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE. Nevertheless, we are developing additional opportunities to further strengthen the students' spiritual foundation, understanding that spiritual maturity is the most important success factor for new ministers. To further deepen our students' spirituality, our future focus areas will be on prayer, biblical grounding, and deeper exploration of ministry's spiritual conflicts and how they manifest. Our goal is to ensure students understand and internalize their ministry calling.

Faculty and staff involvement is the most important element keeping our four pillars strong. Our staff are energetic, enthusiastic, and dedicated because they are here for a higher cause—building the Kingdom of God. With growth comes changes, such as increasing specialization, that will challenge our culture. Accordingly, we are increasingly proactive and intentional in staff and faculty recruitment, support, development, rewards, recognition, and retention. We are casting a wider net in our recruiting, seeking more collegiate expertise and experience, while continuing a strong emphasis on cultural fit. We are also improving onboarding and more clearly delineating expectations and career progression. As we grow and specialize, we will continue to support our staff to ensure we retain our strong family spirit. This will involve additional and better professional development to improve skills and credentials, including tuition assistance and more coaching. We will ensure compensation is commensurate with schools of our size, mission, and stage of development, and that high achievement is incented. We will continue to celebrate and publicize the successes of our faculty and staff. Our expectation is that if we demonstrate excellence in these areas of recruitment, support, development, rewards, and recognition, then our staff will continue with us on our bold and exciting mission of creating great ministry leaders.

GOAL 2

TRANSITION TO ACADEMY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL. *Transition to an immersive Academy model—offering an accredited, baccalaureate, on-campus program rooted in innovative and relational methodologies—producing leaders that are prepared to fulfill the mission of the Church.*

Building on our current Four Pillar Model, Highlands College is embarking on a game-changing transformation of our Ministry Leadership Development program to an Academy-style model that blends a number of elements, including a baccalaureate program, accreditation, an immersive on-campus experience in a church setting, and leading-edge teaching methods enabled by state-of-the-art facilities. Our objective is to provide holistic training that develops the whole person to prepare ministry leaders to fulfill the Great Commission.

ACADEMY MODEL. Leadership is at the heart of Highlands College’s mission and vision. Leadership is needed for scaling—producing graduates who can accelerate and amplify the impact of teams that they recruit, train, and inspire to grow the Kingdom of God. The many elements of leadership are best exemplified in the military service academies, which produce many of America’s finest leaders. We wish to instill many of the same traits and virtues in our graduates, including: discipline; courage; integrity; professionalism; commitment; resilience; high standards; perseverance; selflessness; respectfulness; critical thinking; creative problem-solving; decisiveness; good oral and written communications; adaptability; self-motivation; interpersonal skills; world awareness and cultural competence; personal responsibility; lifelong learning skills; and pragmatism.

To inculcate these virtues and traits, we are adapting methods from the service academies’ holistic leadership training model that fit our mission, vision, culture, and values. These include: a rigorous, structured, and demanding environment; experiential and applied learning; practical and integrative training; a whole person focus; immersion; plentiful enrichment opportunities; physical education; strict accountability; and instruction in soft skills. However, we seek service Academy professionalism without the formalities, such as uniforms and rank. We will also ensure we maintain our focus on our current programs’ essential spirit-led/life-giving elements.

ACCREDITATION is important to achieving legitimacy, respect, and longevity for our College. Accreditation conveys to students, parents, employers, and other constituents that Highlands College is a serious institution of higher education. We are currently seeking accreditation through the Association of Biblical Higher Education (ABHE). In 2020, the ABHE granted the College candidate status. We plan to apply for initial accreditation in 2023. Once initially accredited, we will apply for state approval to be a degree-granting institution, with the objective to offer both associates and bachelor’s degrees. The ABHE has worked closely with Highlands College to show its support for the dynamic and paradigm-shifting elements of our educational model and to help us align our model to meet federal standards. Our objective is for accreditation to support and facilitate the initiatives we are undertaking and for our Strategic Plan to function as a dynamic and organizationally supported catalyst for accreditation. We view the ABHE as an important partner in helping us to develop a new model of biblical higher education.

TRANSITIONING TO A BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM gives us room to accomplish many of our objectives such as comprehensive training in practicums, more electives, deeper biblical and theological



training, and off-site residencies for practical experience. A four-year program should attract more interest, which should translate to more applications—allowing us to attract higher quality students. Our bachelor’s degree, while focusing intensively on biblical, theological, and ministry skills and leadership, also has a core of foundational studies in general education, thereby enhancing the utility of a Highlands College degree. We are also upgrading the credentials of our faculty to include professors with terminal degrees for some courses.

Semester-long residencies will be a requirement of baccalaureate degrees. Initially, residencies will be at Church of the Highlands, then branch out to both ARC churches and other partner churches. We are building relationships with other churches to provide these residencies. We are also creating a financial model for the residency program and studying best practices. To advance our goal of debt-free graduation, our aim is for all residencies to be paid internships.

THREE KEY OBJECTIVES OF OUR FUTURE FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM INCLUDE:

- Deepening leadership training so that students are proficient at not just managing teams but also at identifying, training, inspiring, and pastoring team members. To this end, we will create leadership opportunities at Highlands College, Church of the Highlands, and beyond.
- Fostering adaptability that prepares students to successfully modify learned methods to fit circumstances and environments, based on an understanding of the underlying rationale of the methods.
- Increasing focus on ministry responsibilities outside of Sunday services—those relational, grittier instances of ministry requiring pastoring (e.g., consoling, counseling) that build spiritual and emotional maturity and mold students into leaders.

AN IMMERSIVE ON-CAMPUS EXPERIENCE provides the structure and intensity necessary for shaping students into strong leaders. By immersive, we mean that most of a student’s time is scheduled and strict policies around personal and academic conduct are enforced. We strongly guide our students’ lives. This immersive model will be enabled by our shift to a residential model that includes dining facilities, dormitories, and a wellness center. (*Goal 6: Build a World-Class Training Ground for World-Changing Leaders addresses the new facilities that are being built*). Our intent is for the vast majority of students to live on a campus that provides everything needed for them to work, learn, study, commune, and worship together.

INNOVATIVE AND RELATIONAL METHODOLOGIES. We are studying innovative teaching and learning approaches and developing our training in an active learning model. Our learning studios are built for active learning that provides for creative learning strategies. Our active learning strategy trains students to be responsible for and engaged in their learning. It trains them to be life-long learners. Many of our approaches use and reinforce soft and life skills important to our holistic training. They also align with our focus on relational ministry and with achievement of our longer-term objective of one-on-one discipleship of students—perhaps employing alums, Church ministers, and selected Evening Program students to partner with students.

GOAL 3

DEVELOP STUDENT SERVICES THAT PROPEL

SUCCESS. *Recruit students with the highest potential and guide them through a distinct and inspiring student experience designed to nurture them with intentional student life programs, to place graduates in right-fit job opportunities, and to cultivate an alumni community that supports graduates throughout their lives.*

At Highlands College, we take a lifecycle approach to Student Services that begins with recruitment and ends with post-graduation support. We are committed to providing excellent support to our students at every point in their Highlands College journey.

RECRUITING AND ENROLLMENT. We seek a robust enrollment of 1,000 of the best and brightest students. Enrollment is a linchpin of our strategy, as so much depends on getting it right. Accordingly, we have increased enrollment staffing, are adopting better tools, and have increased our recruiting budget. Our Academy model requires higher admissions standards. We are currently reviewing and revising our selection criteria and process, which will focus on student commitment and calling and markedly raise academic requirements. To achieve growth and quality objectives, we are tapping a broader candidate pool that feeds a well-functioning recruitment pipeline with an aim of markedly increasing applications. We are reaching beyond students interested in Bible colleges to a larger pool of students interested in a top-notch evangelistic Christian education. We are increasingly leveraging the Church's ARC and Grow networks and our alumni. We are becoming more proactive, sending recruiters and ambassadors to high schools, churches, and recruiting events, equipped with effective messaging and recruiting methods. We are considering summer camps to stoke interest in the College. We will continue to host preview days that are light, fun, energetic, and informational, and that communicate our staff and faculty relational involvement with our students and our emphasis on student discipline. We are investing to better understand our market and accentuate our differentiators; we are increasingly focusing our messaging on our collegiate and social elements. We will also make selective, strategic investment in paid media. Lastly, we are analyzing the relationships among price, program quality, and enrollment numbers to appropriately adjust our scholarship program.

STUDENT LIFE PROGRAMS. We are committed to providing a seamless, supportive, and successful student experience from orientation to placement. We walk with new students to provide the emotional and spiritual support they need to adjust to Highlands College, taking special care with students coming from church cultures different from Church of the Highlands. Beginning with orientation, we ensure our communications to parents are frequent and substantive.

“I invest in Highlands College because I know that this is a school that will make a difference. And I want to be a part of the biggest picture of all, making a difference in our world.”

—Dr. John C. Maxwell, NY
Times Bestselling Author and
Leadership Expert

Student Success is *Job One* at Highlands College. We provide students with proactive and substantive advising through periodically scheduled meetings with assigned advisors and coaches. Each student is provided a roadmap, and substantive feedback is provided to let them know if they are succeeding and where to improve. Our advising is holistic; we provide tutoring, proactive financial advising, pastoral care, and spiritual discipleship. A key aim is to consistently reinforce students' ministry calling, helping them to cultivate the skill to know where God wants them to go. Under our four-year Academy model, we will seek from students an affirmation of their calling at the two-year point. To accomplish our enhanced student success initiatives, we will lower our ratio of students to advisors/coaches and assign specific organizational responsibility for retention to ensure all of our staff and faculty are working well together to create an exceptional experience for our students.

Housing and dining are key to providing an immersive experience. Our objective is to provide safe, secure, and comfortable housing to our students. To this end, we are more intensively training our Resident Assistants, so they are equipped to handle any situation. Our Grandview campus will offer expanded dining options with a focus on better nutrition and more variety.

PLACEMENT. Our goal is guaranteed placement opportunities for students in full-time, paid ministry positions. To this end, we have increased placement staffing, are adopting better tools, and have increased our placement budget. We are developing a placement progression process with benchmarks and tracking. Our placement office engages students at orientation and maintains substantive engagement until graduation to ensure students finish well at Highlands College and start well at their new churches. To accomplish this aim, we are developing professional development training to include such things as mock interviews, self-assessments, and instruction in networking and resume writing. Residencies will play an increasingly important role in placement, serving as a bridge to full-time employment.

We are also expanding and deepening our relationships with church-employers. We are better leveraging the ARC and Grow networks to build partnerships and secure opportunities for our students. Using executive search firm techniques, Predictive Index, and other methods, we seek to right-fit our graduates with ministry opportunities. We recognize and celebrate all placements, including publicizing our alumni successes, and we are committed to tracking alumni placement after graduation.

ALUMNI SUPPORT. Highlands College is creating a lifetime, 360-degree support relationship with alumni, where we continue to support graduates while giving them numerous and varied opportunities to give back. To this end, we are creating an alumni network with dedicated staff and are borrowing best practices from more established colleges. This begins with better tracking of our graduates and includes simple, well-branded post-graduation surveys to alumni (and their employers) that gauge satisfaction. We are keen to monitor the health and success of our graduates and are particularly interested in key drivers of ministry retention that we can address with training improvements. We understand that the first year of ministry is especially difficult and are committed to providing emotional and spiritual support for our graduates, using a small group format and supplemented by reunions, roundtables, and regional events to maintain critical relational connections. To this end, we provide accessible personal points of contact. We will also provide alumni with resources for continued professional development.

We are also increasingly tapping into our alumni's desire to give back to Highlands College by providing varied opportunities to coach, teach, and serve as College ambassadors (e.g., in placement, recruiting, and fundraising). We believe it is essential for prospective and current students to experience and work with successful Highlands College graduates.

Although alumni functions will be distributed across our College, to ensure consistency in communications and coordination of actions, we will assign a single owner of alumni relations.

GOAL 4

EXPAND EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS.

Maximize the impact of Highlands College by expanding our top quality, accessible leadership programs and resources to develop and deploy adult ministry and marketplace leaders who are biblically informed, practically empowered, and spiritually strengthened.

Highlands College is adapting and creating educational platforms that complement our full-time, baccalaureate Academy program designed for younger (18 to 25 years old) students recently graduated from high school. These expanding education platforms are evolving from our Evening Program. In 2008, we began offering opportunities for older adults (25 and older) to earn two kinds of ministry certificates: 1) a (Core) certificate for adults seeking to amplify their impact in fulfilling the Great Commission in their daily lives and at work, and 2) a more intensive (Core-Plus) certificate for adults seeking a career change into vocational ministry. These programs have been hugely successful—in 12 years, growing from 20 to 700 students at 12 locations—impelling us to expand our program scope, with the goal of providing multiple lines of Christian Educational products to support Highlands College in remunerative and nonremunerative ways. Our expansion will be focused and deliberate, with adjustments based on empirical evidence.

A LONG-RANGE OPERATIONALIZED STRATEGY

will be developed for our expanded educational platforms. This long-range (5+years) strategy will be well-supported by a Situation Analysis, including rigorous market research beginning with an assessment of customer needs. The markets for our products will be carefully evaluated, including: size, growth, margins, market landscape, customer values/segments, regulations, and our capability to deliver. In developing our strategic plan, we will develop a mission, vision, and goals. We will also create an identity, brand, operating and business models, a detailed work plan, and financial proformas. The work plan will include milestones



and metrics with targets that tie to a manageable set of strategic goals. A key success factor will be narrowing down product ideas to the most attractive set of integrated offerings based on applying objective criteria.

ENHANCING AND EXPANDING OUR CURRENT EVENING PROGRAM will be the initial focus. Building on our success to date, we will re-brand and extend our current two offerings, with the aim of creating a portfolio of more segment-specific certificates: Leadership (4 varieties: personal, professional, business, and ministry), Ministry (for career changes to ministry), Bible, Theological, and Marketplace. We will also explore more a la carte professional development/continuing education courses. For vocational ministry students, we will enhance the program to make it more closely match our current two-year program, including more practical training—for example, more Sunday Serve opportunities. For many certificates, we will explore adding some of the more popular/effective Character Formation and Spiritual Development elements of the Academy program—customized for more mature students. It is still to be determined which of these elements will be integrated into the basic program or supplemental to it. Generally, we will explore add-ons for students in our programs seeking a more in-depth study.

PRODUCT LINE EXTENSIONS offer opportunities for Highlands College to provide an even broader mix of distributable Christian Education goods and services. These extensions would likely begin with establishment of freely accessible streaming content, such as podcasts and an internet channel. And depending on demand for such content, we might offer paid content, perhaps employing a subscription model. Another opportunity, requiring significantly more investment, is creating a remote learning platform for distributing content to broader audiences; this would require purchase of a video Learning Management System and more advanced content development capabilities. This offering could include business leadership courses and programs, where we might partner with Christian business leaders. Success in the online market might logically result in extension to in-person offerings, such as conferences, forums/summits, and workshops. This could also lead to hybrid online/onsite programs, similar to Executive MBA programs, where immersive practical training could be provided at Church of the Highlands' campuses or other satellite locations.

Another attractive segment for our products might be churches and para-ministry organizations, for whom we could provide curriculum and resources—for example, packaging one year of biblically-based leadership courses. This would require a sizeable investment in professionalizing our current content, testing and adapting this content, and creating a support infrastructure. This could also involve licensing our content.

IDENTIFICATION AND TARGETING OF NEW CUSTOMER SEGMENTS will help maximize our impact while also providing necessary scale for offerings that require larger fixed investments. This expansion to new segments might include extending our current program to all Church of the Highlands campuses, empowering campus leadership to build and lead at the local level. ARC and Grow also represent a large, attractive, and easily reached market segment. Other attractive segments for our training include high school students, non-Highlands College students, and business people.

EVENING PROGRAM INTEGRATION INTO HIGHLANDS COLLEGE. We will seek to more closely integrate the Evening Program into our Academy program, providing benefits for both Evening and Academy. Depending on their interests and skills/experience, Evening students seeking practical leadership experience will be provided opportunities to interact with students that might include advising/mentoring, tutoring, and guest lecturing. Evening students might also exercise their spheres of influence to assist with placement, recruiting, and fundraising. Our overarching goal would be to create a community and support network for Highlands College that mutually benefits both Evening and Academy students.



GOAL 5

ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION-DRIVEN OPERATING MODEL.

To expand and deepen Highlands College’s execution skills through leadership development, increased emphasis on work planning, collaboration, clear definition of roles, strategic sourcing of functions, strengthened implementation processes and capabilities, better performance and change management, and improved governance.

Highlands College has a clear and compelling vision supported by an excellent culture and shared values—a reflection of our strong leadership and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Our culture is loving and supportive; our leaders are smart, committed, and hard-working. However, we are embarking on an ambitious and complex transformation requiring us to adjust our operating model to emphasize skillful project management. We will apply operational excellence in planning and managing the translation of our vision to reality. This will require a highly organized and detail-oriented approach that reflects best practices adopted from other high performing organizations, including Church of the Highlands.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT aligns and strengthens our leaders. This begins with carefully detailing the President’s and Chancellor’s responsibilities and expectations, including an expanded role for both in advancement. It also includes clarifying and streamlining decision-making to eliminate the possibility of bottlenecks or redundancy and to continue improved transparency. Increasingly, we are relying on our executive vice presidents to drive implementation and function as a self-directed team. A requirement of this empowerment is a timely and accurate flow of information within the College. Additionally, we are cultivating the next generation of organizational leaders, ensuring our success is continual. Lastly, we are aligning our leadership structure with the Strategic Plan, thus reinforcing an objective of inculcating a strategic mindset focused on long-term, high impact priorities that create substantive and sustainable benefits.

ADVANCED WORK PLANNING METHODS are being adopted to facilitate Highlands College’s transformation to an accredited, baccalaureate Academy model in new state-of-the-art facilities. This transformation will resemble a complex mega-project comprised of many large sub-projects. We will establish an office of project planning, management, and assessment to oversee the College transformation. Leveraging technology, this project management office (PMO), within the Office of the President, will identify and develop/acquire tools (e.g., resource estimators and project management software) to facilitate implementation. The PMO will apply a dynamic work plan approach that lays out tasks, dependencies,

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required resources, critical path, key milestones, and (individual) task owners. This approach will align with and support the Strategic Plan with clear links from goals to sub-goals to actions/priorities to actual tasks on the work plan. Additionally, the College's units will develop plans that link to, align with, and support the College's plan.

COLLABORATION. A cooperative spirit depends on our culture of trust—in each other and the Holy Spirit—and on our shared values. We understand that we are one team and seek/welcome cross-functional initiatives. We incent and reward working together, with a goal of achieving clarity and buy-in. This consensus is facilitated by clear, constructive, and honest communication, relegating personal agendas to the wayside. To further facilitate camaraderie, we use methods, such as Predictive Index, to better understand and relate to our teammates.

CLEAR ROLE DEFINITION is critical to smooth execution. The roles of both individuals and entities will change as the College transforms. Staff will grow, and roles will become more specialized. The potential for redundancy, conflict, delays, and mistakes will increase. To minimize problems, we are more clearly defining roles, career paths, and evaluative criteria and processes—revising the organizational structure to support these changes. We are also emphasizing mentoring and succession planning. We are implementing front-line accountability, enabled by empowerment, to facilitate scaling. To attract and retain talented professionals, we are increasingly differentiating approaches to faculty vs. staff.

Highlands College's transformation means that our organizational relationship with Church of the Highlands will mature. Highlands College will continue to develop its own ecosystem, while partnering with the Church for certain needs, such as expertise and networking with other churches. To this end, the College and the Church must place the highest value on maintaining a close relationship over time while achieving the right level of College autonomy. This might be accomplished through a



steering committee comprised of representatives from both the College and the Church.

STRATEGIC SOURCING OF FUNCTIONS. Highlands College is determining how to best source our functions: internally, externally, or via Church shared services. To this end, we will establish a supply chain function to manage procurement and management of goods and services. As we grow and develop our own infrastructure, we will shift more functions from shared services to the College. We will develop a plan to transition services to the most operationally excellent option based on defined criteria (e.g., enrollment, cost, quality, responsiveness). Services soon to be evaluated are human resources, creative services, and information technology.

STRENGTHENED IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES AND CAPABILITIES. To prepare for transformation, we will conduct a comprehensive review of current processes and systems to evaluate our capability to support growth and anticipated changes. With a keen eye on simplicity, key processes will be documented, and as appropriate, redesigned to minimize steps, dependencies, and hand-offs so as to optimize speed, quality, and throughput. We will develop an enhanced capability to identify, select, and manage technology.

Process design and enrollment growth dictate staffing (and organization structure) and required technology, which should be leveraged to optimize staffing and focus staff on high value tasks. Staff growth must closely correlate with enrollment growth. We will evaluate staff to determine where they can best contribute and develop a hiring and training plan to fill gaps in our expertise. Hiring will be increasingly competitive and might include candidates who are not members of Church of the Highlands; we will increase emphasis on specialized college background/expertise/skills, while maintaining a strong emphasis on cultural fit. We will invest more in staff professional development, especially as it relates to specialization.

BETTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT. Our intent is to create a learning organization where problems and mistakes are seen as opportunities to improve. This begins with establishing centralized measurement, evaluation, and reporting that provides simple, clear, measurable, objective, multi-level metrics—supported by robust data gathering and analytical capabilities and by leveraging technology. We will set aggressive, but reasonable, targets for these metrics, based on objective criteria (e.g., peer performance) and well-established baselines. Departmental dashboards will align with and support college-level metrics and targets. We will adopt an annual planning process—aligned with the Strategic Plan and supported by good forecasting—that evaluates and adjusts our master plan, and consequently drives our budgets (not vice versa). Change management and risk management are critical to improving performance. To that end, we are committed to seamless, end-to-end communications. We will also manage risk by identifying and clearly assessing (i.e., impact and probability) major risks. We will develop plans for mitigating risks that become manifest, including building contingency into our plans and maintaining a substantial financial cushion.

IMPROVED GOVERNANCE. Bounded by institutional guard rails that keep us focused on our mission (e.g., theology, integrated auxiliary status, structure of a future foundation, non-changeable by-law provisions), Highlands College will gradually become appropriately autonomous. To facilitate this progression, several changes to the Board of Directors will be made. The Board will become self-governing, including establishment of standard Board committees. This will involve more deliberate succession planning, with an aim of diversifying Board experience to emphasize business, college, and operational experience, and include adding a representative from ARC. This will require further expansion of the Board. Special emphasis will be placed by the Board on financial and operational excellence, while being careful not to get involved in day-to-day operations or operate outside the purview of the President and Chancellor. The Board will perform an annual review of progress against the Strategic Plan and key metrics.



GOAL 6

BUILD A WORLD-CLASS TRAINING GROUND FOR WORLD-CHANGING LEADERS.

Create an unparalleled state-of-the-art residential campus—emphasizing innovation, technology, active immersive learning, and collaborative environments—that stimulates creativity, engagement, and spiritual growth.

Highlands College’s Grandview campus provides almost limitless opportunities for Highlands College to reflect and support its vision through creating amazing state-of-the-art facilities that echo the major thrusts and themes of our Strategic Plan. In the summer of 2020, we began the transformation of the Grandview campus to a residential, immersive, holistic, relational, Spirit-driven community where students can learn, study, work, socialize, live, and worship together. Phase I of construction will be completed in Spring 2022. The Phase I construction and building of two residence halls are estimated at \$100M.

When fully completed, the Grandview campus will accommodate 1,000 students and will include a student center; learning studios and dedicated/customized practicum spaces; plentiful common/collaborative spaces; dining facilities and a café; a library; a campus green and plaza; a worship sanctuary; fitness facilities and recreation areas; and residence halls to accommodate 500+ students. The 80-acre campus, nearby undeveloped parcels, and unbuilt spaces in existing buildings provide room for achieving our current vision and yet-to-be-imagined future possibilities. Located along Highway 280 and nestled in one of Birmingham’s most sought after suburbs, the Grandview campus is ideally situated to allow students convenient access to shopping, dining, and the many wonderful amenities of the greater Birmingham metro area.

Envisioning, designing, and constructing the master plan for an 80-acre campus to accommodate 1,000 students is a huge and complex undertaking. The project will require 5+ years and occur in multiple phases. We are committed to creating a future-leaning, intentional, community-friendly, and ultimately inspiring campus, while being effective and efficient in our execution.

Four Design/Building Priorities have been identified for Highlands College’s campus:

- **FLEXIBILITY AND FUTURE-LEANING.** The master plan and actual spaces will be created to maximize flexibility. This is prudent for two reasons. First, the campus is being developed simultaneously with other complex initiatives that might impact build-out. Second, methods of teaching and learning,

“We’ll never stop championing the destiny that God has placed inside our students.”

-Mark Pettus,
Highlands College President

and associated tools, are rapidly changing, further reinforcing the need for adaptable spaces to allow for future innovation.

- **INTENTIONALITY AND FUNCTIONALITY.** Spaces will be designed and built to facilitate active and immersive learning and innovation, including new technologies reflecting the latest in proven ministry tools. Design and construction will enable the activities and functions that will occur in these spaces and distinguish Highlands College from other institutions.
- **COMMUNITY.** Well designed and constructed buildings provide a sense of place. At Highlands College, we desire that all who enter our campus feel a strong sense of a Spirit-driven community—a family of like-spirited Christians learning, studying, working, communing, and worshipping together to further the glory of God. We want the immersive, collaborative, and relational elements to shine through in our design, and more importantly, in the use of our facilities. We want our many and diverse constituents to feel at home at Highlands College.
- **INSPIRATION.** We understand Highlands College is part of a bigger design that God has for his followers. Our plan should be realistic, but allow for a vision bigger than we can currently imagine. Accordingly, our campus should stimulate creativity, engagement, and spiritual growth that inspires others to be part of something extraordinary and God-sized.



The design of the campus has been driven by a desire for community. From the vibrant green space to the generous meeting areas inside, every inch of the facility has been designed to bring people together.



The learning spaces inside have been intentionally shaped by the innovative training that will happen inside. The learning studio for the Worship Leadership practicum contains space to watch and create dynamic worship environments as well as spaces for groups of varying size to practice and hone their skills.

HIGH BAR OF EXCELLENCE. Successful Project Management of the campus build-out depends on assigning managers with relevant experience and expertise, establishing rigorous processes, and leveraging the right tools. Following are the key elements of Grandview project management:

- **PROJECT SCOPING AND ESTIMATION** - Estimating timing, costs, and specifications, including factoring in future building maintenance needs and associated costs.
- **PROJECT ORGANIZATION** - Assigning and organizing human resources, including describing accountabilities and clearly delineating oversight and final decision-making authority.
- **PROJECT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT** - Identifying tasks, timing, critical path, ownership, resources, and milestones—probably incorporated into a Gantt chart, using a specialized project management application. Once established, our plan will be dynamically managed. We will build contingency into the schedule to account for uncertainties and unforeseeable events. We must also develop and/or acquire required zoning expertise and ensure zoning requirements are reflected in our planning.
- **BUDGETING AND COST CONTROL** - Developing a detailed budget and cost control measures and protocols. Tracking will be continuous. We will build some contingency into the budget and use a specialized budgeting application.
- **CHANGE ORDER MANAGEMENT** - Creating a process for making project changes. Our objective is to minimize scope creep and stay on schedule and within budget.
- **STRATEGIC SOURCING** - Procuring project materials and services through a disciplined and comprehensive request-for-proposal process.
- **CONTRACT MANAGEMENT** - Managing contracts to ensure that provisions are followed, and if not followed, contract provisions for non-performance are executed.
- **QUALITY ASSURANCE** - Setting quality standards and measurement protocols during planning. Inspecting and testing once the project is underway.
- **ISSUE MANAGEMENT** - Establishing a mechanism for prioritizing and escalating issues.
- **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT** - Establishing metrics/milestones with targets and associated monitoring and reporting systems.
- **RISK MANAGEMENT** - Identifying and quantifying (i.e., impact and probability) major project risks and establishing actions to militate against the identified risks or mitigate risks should they become manifest.
- **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** - Identifying stakeholders and their communications needs/requirements (i.e., type of information, periodicity, medium). We will publish a communication plan. Additionally, we will provide frequent project status reports.

GOAL 7

FUND THE FUTURE. *Secure needed funding by expanding and deepening relationships with supporters, churches, foundations, alumni, and parents, and by exploring additional revenue sources to successfully launch students debt-free to fulfill their ministry calling.*

The speed of realizing our vision is closely correlated with funds raised and wise stewarding of those funds. Highlands College, currently an integrated auxiliary of Church of the Highlands, is financially strong with \$24M (as of Fall 2020) in unrestricted funds and more than 80% of our operating budget coming from tuition and fees. We will continue to adhere to conservative financial practices, incurring debt only for capital improvements. Our overriding aim is for students to graduate debt-free. Achieving this aim will require substantial additional funds. Initially, we will offer enhanced and expanded scholarships to students with an ultimate goal of free tuition for all students, supplemented by additional aid to students based on need.

A LONG-RANGE OPERATIONALIZED ADVANCEMENT PLAN

is being developed for the Office of Advancement, which raises funds for the College. A key aim is to create systems that promote excellence (e.g., consistency, professionalism, efficiency) in fundraising and stewardship. This includes performance tracking and reporting, using metrics and targets. Over time, we will hire more experienced development officers. We will create partnerships with organizations that facilitate fundraising, but also provide benefits in other areas, such as recruiting. We will also explore establishing a foundation. Two key thrusts of Advancement, Cultivation and Stewardship, are discussed below.

ENHANCED CULTIVATION STRATEGIES are being developed and applied. This begins with more sophisticated segmentation of our donor base, resulting in customized appeals to our supporters. Our initial focus is on engaging Church of the Highlands members to expand and deepen their support to fully realize the giving potential of Church membership. Our approach is primarily informational, centered on conveying our vision and providing giving instructions. These efforts will include engagement with Evening Program students. Over time, we will extend our efforts to the Church's ARC and Grow networks; initial appeals will promote stronger engagement with us—for example, assistance with filling our recruiting pipeline and with hiring our graduates—with the hope that churches will understand the benefits of financial support of our College. We will also reach beyond the Church family and network—with a more direct approach—to other churches, para-ministry organizations, secular givers and organizations, and most especially family-led foundations and Donor Advised Funds.

Highlands College is financially strong with \$24M (as of Fall 2020) in unrestricted funds and more than 80% of our operating budget coming from tuition and fees.

We will also continue to apply more assertive and varied strategies in our fundraising. Where appropriate, we will make direct asks from potential supporters. We will also place increased emphasis on vehicles and channels for giving, including: pledge gifts, giving days, gift matching, planned gifts, big fundable (and nameable) ideas, crowdfunding, leveraging of social media, and receipt/processing of complex asset gifts. To enable this more assertive approach, Church of the Highlands' leadership and the Board of Directors will exert more influence, particularly in connecting capable donors with the Office of Advancement.

A key fundraising stratagem is creating supporter organizations, including alumni and parent support organizations, with the intent of creating a culture of giving among our loyal constituents.

Lastly, we are working to emphasize the right messages in our communications including: eternal legacy, student impact, refusal of government money, Church endorsement, our Academy model (especially its free tuition and holistic, hands-on training), and opportunities (not needs). Strategies that provide exposure to our students (for example, in Chapel) or their stories are especially effective.

EXCELLENT STEWARDSHIP. Our goal is to create a great experience for our supporters. To that end, we are committed to consistency and predictability in our donor interactions, including efficient processing of donations and true expression of gratitude. Attention to detail and personal touches are essential. To create a strong giving culture, we are implementing standard elements of donor stewardship, such as donor levels/societies. For our most generous donors, we will provide financial and impact statements. We also seek to involve interested donors in assisting our College in other ways that deepen their commitment to us and help meet other needs of the College (e.g., guest speakers, mentors, expertise).

OTHER IMPORTANT FINANCING SOURCES. A number of other sources of revenue are important to Highlands College. Increasingly, we will look to our expanded educational platforms to provide funding for the College. Goal 4 lays out our vision for these platforms and the role they will play in financing the College. In addition to donations and in-kind contributions, Church of the Highlands has generously provided an annual gift from its Legacy Offering. We intend to better forecast this



Legacy funding. Lastly, we are working to better understand and forecast revenue from tuition and fees, which for the foreseeable future will be the primary revenue source for our operating budget. Understanding the relationship among enrollment, pricing, and total revenues from tuition and fees is essential to better forecasting and ensure appropriate College funding.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND PRUDENT FINANCING AND ACCOUNTING (F&A) PRACTICES play a critical role in the financing of the College. We always strive to find the most cost-effective means to achieve quality results. Goal 5: Enhance the Implementation-Driven Operating Model and our Operational Excellence Theme describes specific operational excellence principles and priorities we have adopted. In the area of finance and accounting, we are taking a number of actions. We are increasingly adopting a mindset of investable monies as distinct from money for operations. We are developing better forecasting tools and implementing iterative planning that drives budgeting (not vice versa). We also continue to develop accountability-driven accounting and financial systems and are increasingly segregating F&A responsibilities. We are developing better policies about spending unrestricted funds and the handling of debt, including rules for amortization and borrowing. Lastly, we are committed to a stronger Board role in financial oversight.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Highlands College followed a rigorous and inclusive approach to develop its Strategic Plan. Tim Becker of Probity Business Group facilitated the process. Becker was formerly a partner with Accenture. The strategic planning project was launched with the following charter:

To document, refine, and articulate Highlands College's Strategic Plan in a way that is both inclusive (of various stakeholders) and rigorous so that the College can most effectively and efficiently supply the Church with leaders of character and competence to fulfill the Great Commission.

The six-month process consisted of three overlapping phases.

PHASE 1: Situation Analysis (April – June 2020). The Situation Analysis is an in-depth assessment of Highlands College that provided a well-researched, fact-driven foundation for development of Highlands College's Strategic Plan. Highlands College was assessed against a number of dimensions. Four methods were used in the Situation Analysis, including:

- **Interviews.** A total of 14 in-depth (90+ minutes) interviews were conducted with the entire Highlands College leadership team, key donors, and several Board Members.
- **Listening Sessions** were conducted with six Highlands College stakeholder groups, including parents, alumni, pastor-employers, Board Members, faculty and staff, and current students. A total of 36 stakeholders participated in the listening sessions.
- **Document Review.** Highlands College provided 186 documents that were reviewed for content relevant to 1) assessing Highlands College and 2) writing the Strategic Plan.
- **Secondary Research** was conducted in selected areas. This included collecting strategic plans of 20 peer and aspirant colleges.

Results of these methods were synthesized into findings and conclusions that were incorporated into a Situation Analysis describing Highlands College current situation, including areas for improvement.

PHASE 2: Development of Mission, Vision, Goals, and Themes (June – August 2020). A stakeholder team was formed that consisted of the Highlands College senior leadership team, a Board Member, a key donor, an alum, and a pastor-employer. Using the Situation Analysis as a reference, the team was led through a series of exercises and workshops to develop the mission, vision, goals, and themes, which provided the framework/outline for the Strategic Plan. The team also provided input on the sub-goals and actions required to support and implement the goals of the Strategic Plan.

PHASE 3: Strategic Plan Development (August – September 2020). Using the mission, vision, goals, themes, and other input, drafts of the Strategic Plan, edited by Mr. Becker, were reviewed and revised by the stakeholder team and Board of Directors until consensus was achieved. The Board approved the Strategic Plan at its September 2020 Board meeting.