Transformed by the Journey

A Sesquicentennial Strategic Plan for Luther College

Luther College’s sesquicentennial strategic plan, Transformed by the Journey, was launched in 2008 and concluded in December 2012. Significant progress was made fulfilling the planning goals and the accompanying $50-million fundraising initiative, The Sesquicentennial Fund, which garnered an impressive $57 million in gifts, pledges, and planned gifts. This success occurred in spite of the national economic downturn that occurred shortly after the funding initiative was launched.

The strategic plan’s two dozen planning recommendations focused on a broad range of college operations and programs. It has been gratifying to see what has been accomplished in four years, particularly in the area of environmental sustainability. Significant accomplishments at Luther were recognized in 2010, when the college was one of eight schools in the nation to earn an A grade on the College Sustainability Report Card, and in 2012 when the college received Second Nature’s Climate Leadership Award.

Transformed by the Journey, the second comprehensive strategic plan in President Richard Torgerson’s tenure, concludes as a search for Luther’s 10th president is under way. The college moves forward from a position of strength, thanks to the collective efforts of Luther staff, faculty, alumni, parents, and friends who are remarkable in their dedication to this college. Their commitment to students helps ensure a bold and bright future for this community of faith and learning.

Key achievements:

**Teaching and Learning**
- Luther received a $1.5 million grant for science education from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.
- Luther became a member of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), a consortium of academically excellent liberal arts colleges, giving Luther students access to a broader range of study-abroad experiences and providing faculty and staff numerous opportunities for enrichment.
- The faculty adopted a three-year plan for online learning following a summer 2012 pilot of three online courses.
- A comprehensive review of the Paideia program was completed and new course descriptions were adopted.
- A new Italy-based semester program, Earth and Environment, is being offered in collaboration with Carleton College and Lawrence University.
- Courses in Mandarin Chinese are now offered.
- A planned Center for Nordic Studies with an endowed faculty position in Norwegian language and modern Nordic studies will strengthen existing programs and forge new ties to Scandinavia.
- An established externship program allows students to shadow alumni and Luther parents at their work sites during fall break.
- More students are participating in experiential learning activities. (67% of 2011 graduates participated in job shadowing, an externship, an internship, or research based on or off campus).
A plan has been developed to enhance learning opportunities in work-study positions since 70% of Luther students work on campus.

Outdoor immersion trips led by faculty and staff provide 60-some incoming students the opportunity to begin the experience of learning in community.

A $169,000 grant from the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust supported the purchase of a 300 MHz NMR spectrometer for use in teaching and research.

Two Teagle Foundation Value-Added Assessment Grants have funded a collaborative project with five other colleges, allowing Luther to gain valuable data on student progress in writing, critical thinking, and student engagement. And in 2010, Luther began a three-year initiative focused on critical thinking with the Wabash Center for Inquiry, a valuable faculty development opportunity.

More attention is being given across campus and in marketing initiatives to assessment data and Luther's Goals for Student Learning.

New majors have been added in international studies and intermedia arts, and classics has a new track, classical studies.

Advising for honors/student scholarships has received more attention with the expansion of an associate dean position. Since 2009, Luther student honors and awards have included a Rhodes scholarship, three McElroy fellowships, and 13 Fulbright awards. In addition, seven Luther students have been awarded NCAA postgraduate scholarships in the past four years.

Campus Diversity

Enhanced faculty and staff guidelines are in place to help increase the number of minority candidates in faculty and staff searches.

An interfaith initiative coordinated by College Ministries and the Diversity Center cultivates intentional engagement among people of different faiths and traditions.

"Connect for Success," a new student orientation experience for multicultural and first-generation students, assists with the transition to social, cultural, and academic life.

There has been a steady increase in enrolling U.S. students of color (7.8% of the student body in fall 2012) and international students (5.3% of the student body in fall 2012), the latter aided by Luther’s success with United World College recruiting efforts.

Marketing and Enrollment

Luther now has centralized leadership for communications and marketing.

Significant web enhancements, the development of a social media strategy, the use of videos, and the streaming of events are expanding Luther’s visibility and allowing the college to better connect with alumni, parents, and friends.

Stronger print and web tools describe preprofessional programs, Paideia, and outcomes of a Luther education.

Partnering with Twin Cities Public Television to broadcast Christmas at Luther in 2008 and 2012 increased national visibility. The 2008 program earned a regional Emmy award.

College Ministries has an enhanced website, chapel streaming, and sends out an e-newsletter.

Academic departments are broadening relationships with alumni through e-newsletters and new customer relationship management (CRM) system tools.

An I-35 Corridor initiative is aimed at attracting more students from high-population centers in Iowa, and an admissions counselor will begin work in Des Moines in 2013.

New initiatives, such as the First Advantage Application program, Senior Search, an alumni referral initiative, a recruiter in Chicago, and “Shadow Days” and other new campus visit programs, have built a stronger applicant pool.
Alumni Council and Parents Council admissions efforts have been established to help with student recruitment.

Partnership agreements with five community colleges are being developed to help boost transfer enrollment.

Over $22 million of the $57 million raised for The Sesquicentennial Fund is designated for endowed student scholarships.

Technology and Information Literacy

The college has implemented a CRM system, Slate, to better manage admissions communications and marketing.

A web content management program, Reason, has been adopted and some 200 student web content managers have been trained.

IT instruction and training programs, including regular offerings on information literacy and utilizing technology in the classroom, have seen higher participation numbers.

The college has partnered with Google to provide e-mail, calendar, and search services.

Several user portals have been developed, streamlining workflow.

Annual audits of Luther’s technology infrastructure have begun.

A mobile device portal has been launched (m.luther.edu).

New strategies for network security have been implemented.

An innovative-services librarian has been hired to foster information literacy and technology innovation.

Environmental Sustainability

ENERGY/ CARBON FOOTPRINT REDUCTION

In May 2012 the Board of Regents endorsed campus carbon footprint reduction goals of 50% by 2015, 70% by 2020, and carbon neutrality by 2030.

As of May 31, 2012, Luther's carbon footprint has been reduced 33% below the college's peak emissions in fiscal year 2003–2004. Energy-related emissions have declined 36.7% through major investments in energy efficiency, a switch to natural gas as the sole heating fuel, the installation of a 1.6 megawatt wind turbine, and small annual purchases of carbon offsets from a local community wind project. These substantial emission reductions have been achieved despite the addition of the Sampson Hoffland Laboratories and substantial conditioned-space additions in Main and the renovated Valders Hall of Science.

In August 2012 the college began leasing a utility-scale, 280 kilowatt (kW) solar photovoltaic array that is powering Baker Village. Another 20 kW array will be installed near Shirley Baker Commons by May 2013.

A “sustainability house” for students opened in fall 2010 and is powered by a donor-funded 4 kW solar array.

Emissions from campus fleet vehicles have been reduced through the purchase of several hybrid cars, electric maintenance vehicles, and a pickup used for recycling that is powered by compressed natural gas.

A bike share program, a shuttle service in town and to major airports during breaks, and a U-Car share program are reducing student vehicle emissions.

The college continues to convert waste vegetable oil into biodiesel, which it uses in a 50/50 blend to power lawn and garden vehicles.

Professional feasibility studies have been commissioned regarding energy efficiency, wind energy, biomass combustion, and solar energy. A building systems retro-commissioning study is under way.

Facilities and Grounds

Valders Hall of Science and Miller and Dieseth residence halls were renovated.

The outdoor track was resurfaced.

The cafeteria seating area was remodeled. Sodexo will remodel the serving area in summer 2013.

Construction of an aquatic center, a $6.39 million project, will be completed by June 2013. (Note: This was an identified need that was not part of the original strategic plan.)

A comprehensive land stewardship plan was created, a Land Use Committee established, and an instructor who manages Luther’s natural land areas was hired.

Bentdahl Commons and Farwell Clearing were added to the campus in keeping with landscape designer Jens Jensen’s 1911 vision for Luther.

New outdoor campus signage was installed.

New roads were created in the central part of campus and one that cut through the central clearing was removed.
**SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES**

- The adoption of a trayless cafeteria in January 2009 has significantly reduced food waste and a compost collection system diverts compost from the landfill and improves the soil in Luther gardens.
- Working with Sodexo, the college is on schedule to meet its goal of having local and identifiable-source foods make up 35% of total food purchases by 2013.
- A robust recycling program tackles small and large projects, including building remodeling.
- The goal of decreasing water consumption by 15 percent has been surpassed. In the past four years, the campus has decreased consumption by 23.9%, and this will improve further with the installation of a new dishwasher in the cafeteria.
- Luther now purchases FSC-certified (Forest Stewardship Council), 50% post-consumer content paper.
- An Energy Star Policy, Green Building Policy, and Green Cleaning Policy have all been adopted.
- Software for energy education on campus has been installed—a dashboard that provides real-time electricity, water, and heat use data for many buildings on campus.
- Campaigns to reduce energy consumption on campus have been organized, including an energy pledge, and “green room” and “green office” certification programs.

**PROGRAMMING**

- A new Center for Sustainable Communities focuses on energy, food and health, education, and land management. A faculty director has been named and an assistant director will be hired in 2013. $3.4 million of a $5 million goal has been raised or committed to fund an endowment that will support personnel and programs.
- A deferred gift has been secured to endow a chair in environmental studies.
- An energy and waste steward has been hired (a grant-funded position) and a Campus Sustainability Council is working well.
- Funding is in place for a dozen sustainability summer internships, including two “greening church” internships.

**GRANTS SECURED FOR SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES**

- $85,979— Iowa Department of Natural Resources. For the installation of a permeable parking lot to reduce storm water run-off (2010).
- $750,000—U.S. Department of Energy, Wind and Hydro Program. Funded energy-related improvements in the renovation of Miller and Dieseth and a 20 kW solar photovoltaic demonstration system at Shirley Baker Commons (2010).
- $500,000 grant and $1,302,000 guaranteed loan—U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Energy for America Program. Awarded to Luther College Wind Energy Project, LLC (2009).
- $445,000— Margaret A. Cargill Foundation. Funded student sustainability internships and a variety of programs and initiatives related to environmental studies and the Center for Sustainable Communities. (2009)
- $45,000— Rocky Mountain Institute. For a campus greenhouse gas reduction initiative focused on energy conservation (2009).