

FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE



EU 2025



Eastern University Strategic Plan Updated November, 2016

Introduction

The brokenness that pervades the world yearns for men and women who have been prepared for thoughtful and productive lives of Christian faith, leadership and service. Opportunities and threats abound in this fast-paced milieu, where success depends on our capacity to understand and respond to developments in local, national and global contexts. Higher education prepares human beings to face these challenges, particularly when it is informed and shaped by an integrated vision of faith, reason and justice.



Eastern University, through its five colleges and seminary, is vigorously pursuing this Christian vision for education by strengthening academic quality, expanding access to our programs, and advancing expertise in transformative pedagogies. In the end, our goal is nothing less than to dramatically impact individuals and society for the cause of Christ.

How will we achieve this vision? Eight strategic imperatives shape our Plan to become the Northeast's premier destination for Christian education at an institution of our size and type. The title of the Plan is *Foundation for the Future: EU 2025*.

The Plan includes the following elements (1) an introduction that outlines the purpose and goals, background and organization of the Plan; (2) a description of identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, as well as external environmental trends that influenced the formation of this Plan; (3) the University's articulated mission, vision, foundational and strategic commitments, (4) the specific imperatives, goals and metrics that will guide University activity and drive resource allocation toward Eastern University's articulated vision over the next three to five years, and (5) a financial model for the Plan. The Imperatives are operationalized through the final piece of the Plan—five year strategic plans for each Division, that include operational details, as well as primary responsibilities, timelines and resources necessary to achieve goals.

This document reflects the University's commitment to strategic, integrated planning. Significant efforts were made during the planning process to ensure synergy between divisions, colleges and units. The University and Division level Plans included in this document are informed by extensive analysis of current and future environmental trends, a SWOT analysis

and a robust program of institutional assessment. Further, it is important to note that Eastern's dynamic culture of strategic thought and action is likely to demand the University's response to as yet unforeseen opportunities and threats during the period covered by this Plan. Therefore, the Plan will be executed with openness to environmentally-driven revisions along the way. Such revisions will be strategically oriented, mission-driven and data-informed.

The External Environment and Eastern University

In the years ahead, the University faces a number of significant challenges as the higher education environment shifts and changes, while expectations and requirements for increased transparency and accountability rise.



To ensure a Plan informed by both current internal and external environmental factors, as well as future higher education trends, a SWOT analysis and extensive environmental scan were completed and used to inform the planning process (see Appendix 1 for *Environmental Scan Executive Summary 2025*). Based on these findings, key external challenges facing the institution include:

A Shift in Demographics-The student population has and will become increasingly diverse- racially, ethnically, socially, economically and by age and educational status. The University must stay nimble enough to meet the needs of all types of students, at the same time ensuring teaching and learning excellence across all modes of educational delivery. In our planning processes, it will be especially critical to recognize that, while the 18-24 age group remains the largest group enrolling in post-secondary education, the greatest growth will be in those aged 24 and older. Further, the next decade will bring significant growth in the numbers of high school graduates from Black and Hispanic backgrounds, as well as those students with first and second generation immigrant status.

Rising Tuition Costs and the Value-Added Crisis- To address the growing concern regarding both rising tuition costs and skepticism about the "true value" of a college education, the institution must become more effective at delivering an excellent Christian education that leads to fulfilling careers without significantly increasing tuition costs.

A Focus on Common Core Standards- The University must successfully respond to a renewed focus on both the state and federal levels on implementing Common Core Standards for learning, while simultaneously ensuring the vocational viability of earning a higher education credential.

Increased Competition- As a private, Christian institution in an era of shifting and often declining enrollments, Eastern University faces greater competition from community colleges, the proprietary sector and other four-year colleges and universities. A further potential challenge is

the declining number of people that align themselves with a specific religious affiliation, especially young adults (18-29). In the future, religious groups that may see a decrease in numbers include Catholic non-Hispanic, Protestant fundamentalist, and Protestant liberal. A focus on maximizing the strength of our commitment to mission; establishing our niche in the Northeast, expanding our national global reputation, utilizing innovative delivery methods to reach our target markets, and continuing to invest in and expand our current physical facilities is vital to survival.

Further Demands for Increased Quality Assurance and Accountability- In support of the federal higher education agenda, federal and state agencies continue to roll out initiatives that emphasize decreasing student debt, reducing tuition costs and developing innovative new educational delivery methods. These initiatives have served as the impetus for a frenzied focus on increased transparency and accountability at the institutional level. More specifically, this focus has led to a concentrated emphasis on student learning outcomes, completion and placement rates and regulatory compliance issues, including state authorization and regional and programmatic accreditation. Another area of increased focus in the higher education sector is enterprise risk management. The institution must ensure that it remains up to date on this ever-changing landscape and current in its response to increased demands for accountability and transparency.

Shifting Models of Instructional Delivery- The old adage, “The more things change; the more they stay the same” may be apt as we evaluate future trends in instructional delivery. Technological developments continue to challenge the way traditional learning in the classroom has taken place. Online learning, MOOCs and technology-enhanced learning have all disrupted common assumptions about student choice relevant to how students would prefer to learn. Further, momentum is increasing for the development of competency-based higher education independent of course and credit hour.

At the same time, competitors continue to invest significant resources to expand and improve physical facilities, thus suggesting that traditional education will continue to be a priority. In consideration of these findings, Eastern University must focus both on re-capturing its historic position as a leading innovator in Christian higher education, while ensuring continued investment in expanding and upgrading current physical facilities.

Changing Role of Faculty- Research consistently demonstrates that a strong and engaged faculty is critical to student success. In the past decade, the role of faculty, in its traditional sense, has changed, as innovative learning models are introduced, organizational structures shift and institutions are held increasingly accountable for demonstrating student learning outcomes. In addition, colleges and universities are becoming increasingly dependent upon contingent faculty, which can create issues with student connectedness. As we prepare to educate the students of 2025, the University must recognize and address this shift in its academic model and plans.

SWOT Analysis

As part of the planning process, the University Leadership Team conducted a SWOT analysis. The results of this analysis were reinforced through findings from other institutional assessment activity, including, but not limited to: nationally benchmarked surveys, comprehensive administrative unit reviews conducted by external evaluators, the most recent Middle States evaluation site visit, and a comparison of key performance metrics against identified peer and aspirant groups. The results from the SWOT analysis figure prominently into the current version of the strategic plan, as do current and anticipated environmental factors.

Key conclusions are mapped below:

Figure 1. SWOT Analysis-Key Findings

Internal	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cohesive Christian community• Well-qualified faculty• National and global brand recognition• Engaging mission• A community of faculty, staff and students committed to living out the mission on a daily basis• Reputation within progressive evangelical community• Beautiful campus located close to a major metropolitan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aging and inadequate facilities• Endowment and Fund-raising• Inefficiencies in organizational structure and organization• Insufficient resources• Still establishing a culture of integrated planning• Declining enrollment
External	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mission that resonates with the external community• Untapped advancement opportunities• Established commitment to adult education• Commitment to providing educational opportunities for under-represented populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post-Christian culture• Increasing institutional costs (e.g. healthcare; deferred maintenance)• Increasing costs of education• Economy and job market• Increasing federal and state expectations and regulations• Shifting demographic trends• Local township restraints

Capitalizing on Eastern University's Strengths and Opportunities

While the University, like many of its peers, faces numerous challenges over the next decade, future trends in higher education also provide the institution with the opportunity to capitalize upon its strengths, including:

- A strong missional identity
- Untapped advancement opportunities
- An established commitment to adult education
- Diverse educational opportunities, including the Seminary and Esperanza College
- A nationally and internationally recognized entrepreneurial spirit

All of these factors were taken into consideration in the drafting of *Foundation for the Future: EU 2025*.



Mission, Vision, Foundational and Strategic Commitments

The Institutional Plan is grounded in Eastern University's mission, vision, foundational and strategic commitments. These elements are articulated below:

Mission

Eastern University is a Christian university dedicated to the preparation of undergraduate, theological and graduate students for thoughtful and productive lives of Christian faith, leadership and service. The mission is confirmed and celebrated when graduates believe their way into knowledgeable action that influences their world in substantive ways.

Vision

Eastern University is dedicated to ideas, inquiry and the development of people of faith who will enhance the quality of society and the Church. Toward that end, Eastern will continue to expand its formative role in the world as a university in which knowledge and wisdom are imbued, Christ-like engagement is inspired, and stewardship is modeled.

Foundational Commitments

Eastern University is dedicated to the following foundational commitments:

To excellence in scholarship and teaching:

We maintain a high priority on excellence in teaching within the context of exemplary scholarship and research. Guided by our faith in Jesus Christ, who is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), we believe in the unity of God's truth, whether supernaturally revealed or humanly discovered; we value the search for knowledge and understanding in all areas of life.

Thus we desire to foster an environment in which:

- Students develop intellectual curiosity, passion and agility, valuing the life of the mind and life-long learning;
- Students develop their critical thinking, reflection, analysis, and communication skills;
- Students develop knowledge and competencies in the arts, sciences and professions;
- Faculty are supported in and recognized for scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching.

To the whole gospel for the whole world through whole persons:

We recognize the Bible, composed of the Old and New Testaments, as inspired of God and as the supreme and final authority in faith and life. We submit ourselves to carrying out our mission under its authority and seek to apply biblical principles to all facets of human

aspiration and action, including the centrality of personal transformation. We affirm the importance of calling all persons everywhere to personal faith and faithful discipleship in following Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, including living out the whole gospel in a needy and lost world. Thus we seek:

- To enable students to develop a Christian worldview, grounded in the Scriptures;
- To enable students to discern the ethical consequences of decisions and actions;
- To foster an environment in which all members of the campus community desire and participate in their own Christian formation;
- To develop a campus community where all give witness to a Christian worldview, through action and voice, motivated to explore faithfulness to Christ through Christ-centered study, work and living.

To justice, reconciliation, and transformation:

In our commitment to sharing the whole gospel to the whole world, we acknowledge with sorrow the brokenness of the world at personal, national, and international levels. Thus, we seek to work for Christian transformation, justice and reconciliation in all areas of life, as these are grounded in our understanding of Christ's calling to us. We particularly seek to work with and for the poor, oppressed and suffering persons as part of our Christian discipleship. Thus we seek:

- To provide educational opportunities and financial aid as best we can for those with few or no financial resources to attend a private Christian university;
- To motivate students to assume responsibility for justice and to show a transformative influence-especially regarding social, political, and economic justice;
- To enable all members of the campus community to participate in opportunities for meaningful service, demonstrating love for God and neighbors and working towards justice.

To responsible leadership and stewardship:

We believe that our complex society needs leadership in all institutions that is intelligent, informed, insightful, ethical, strategic, and just. We are dedicated to graduating students whose wisdom, Christian values, and skills enable them to lead and manage such institutions, including those that are the most influential. Similarly, we commit to excellence in the leadership of Eastern and in the stewardship of University resources. Further, we believe that we are to care not only for people throughout the world, but also for creation itself as responsible stewards of the environment and other physical resources. Thus we seek:

- To prepare students to live in an interdependent world, aware of societal and global problems and committed to engage in solving them;
- To engender the wisdom and character necessary for sound Christian leadership;
- To inspire all members of the campus community to care for creation and responsible stewards and to model that care in the use of University facilities and resources.

To Christian community:

Our commitments lead us to work towards shaping a campus community that embodies values of Christian witness, caring and compassion, justice and integrity, competence and affirmation. We wish to treat each member of the campus community with fairness, dignity, and respect, seeking a spirit of unity and harmony as we join together to achieve our common mission. Thus we seek:

- To foster genuine community, where individuals show compassion and friendship towards others in the spirit of Christian love;
- To help students increase in self-awareness and in their sensitivity towards others and others' needs and situations;
- To foster an environment where diversity is appreciated and reconciliation is practiced;
- To equip all members of the campus community to live well with one another, honoring, supporting, and affirming one another.

Strategic Commitment

Eastern University is committed to supporting continuous quality improvement through mission driven, data-informed decision making processes.



Strategic Imperative #1-Celebrate Teaching and Learning Excellence

Narrative Summary:

Our mission is to help human beings thrive through transformative education. We will pursue this imperative by strengthening our academic culture and fostering an environment where excellence in teaching, learning, mentoring, research and scholarship is recognized. The result will be students who succeed academically and who are prepared for success in life.

Goals:

In order to fulfill this imperative, Eastern University will:

- a) Advance faculty expertise and innovation in the scholarship and practice of teaching, learning and mentoring.
- b) Complete and operationalize a long-term academic plan that prioritizes programs based upon mission and market.
- c) Advance, recognize and reward faculty achievements in teaching, scholarship and mentoring.
- d) Ensure every academic unit shows a pattern of continuous improvement in student learning outcomes by 2019.



Strategic Imperative # 2-Strengthen our Influence in the Global Church through Faith, Reason and Justice

Narrative Summary:

As a University with ties to the American Baptist Churches/USA and ties to the broader universal church, intentionally foster ways in which EU can reflect the mission of the church to be (1) Kingdom focused, (2) visionary, (3) redemptive, and (4) restorative (both with respect to individuals and society).

Goals:

In order to fulfill this imperative, Eastern University will:

- a) Enhance relationships and build partnerships with Christian churches and para-church organizations through missional activity.
- b) Prepare our students to shape the Church for service in the 21st century.
- c) Implement a University branding program that creates believers in EU's core values both internally and externally.
- d) Recruit and retain employees with vibrant commitments to Christ, the Church, and service to our students.



Strategic Imperative #3-Lead through Innovative Education

Narrative Summary:

We will recapture our historic position as a leading innovator in the delivery of Christian higher education. Our history testifies to the power of imaginative thought and innovative action in the service of its distinctive mission. Eastern faculty, administrators and staff will collaborate on strategic responses to opportunities that align our institutional commitment to excellent, accessible higher education characterized by faith, reason and justice.

Goals:

In order to fulfill this imperative, Eastern University will:

- a) Become a preferred Christian institution for quality online education.
- b) Grow our global presence by attracting international students through distinctive domestic and overseas programs.
- c) Design options that ensure accessibility to EU programs through innovative approaches to reduced cost and expanded delivery.



Strategic Imperative # 4-Become the Premier Destination for Christian Talent and Career Development

Narrative Summary:

We are committed to helping students identify and cultivate their God-given talents. Every student is created in the image of God and endowed with unique gifts and abilities. Our students will understand these exciting capabilities and, as graduates, will flourish in vocations that employ their talents. As part of our theological and educational mission we want to help our students capture a sense of call, vocation, spiritual gifts and talents. This imperative links our theological vision with academic success and vocational aspiration.

Goals:

In order to fulfill this imperative, Eastern University will:

- a) Engage prospective and current students in a process of self-discovery that leads to life-long success.
- b) Provide each student with the opportunity for an internship, service learning or practical experience that engages their talents and gifts.
- c) Create a model student advising and support program.
- d) Establish vocational development across all curricular and co-curricular programs.



Strategic Imperative #5-Provide Pathways to Academic Success for Diverse Communities

Narrative Summary:

Employing best practice, we will recruit, retain and graduate a growing and diverse body of students that thrive at the University and flourish as alumni.

Goals:

In order to achieve this imperative, Eastern University will:

- a) Significantly increase enrollment.
- b) Significantly increase the number and diversity of Eastern University graduates.
- c) Transform the enrollment process into a seamless, convenient experience that engages prospective students.
- d) Fortify the commitment of all faculty, staff and students to the success of a diverse student population.
- e) Enhance our awareness of and support for individual student success.



Strategic Imperative #6-Make Eastern University a Great Place to Work

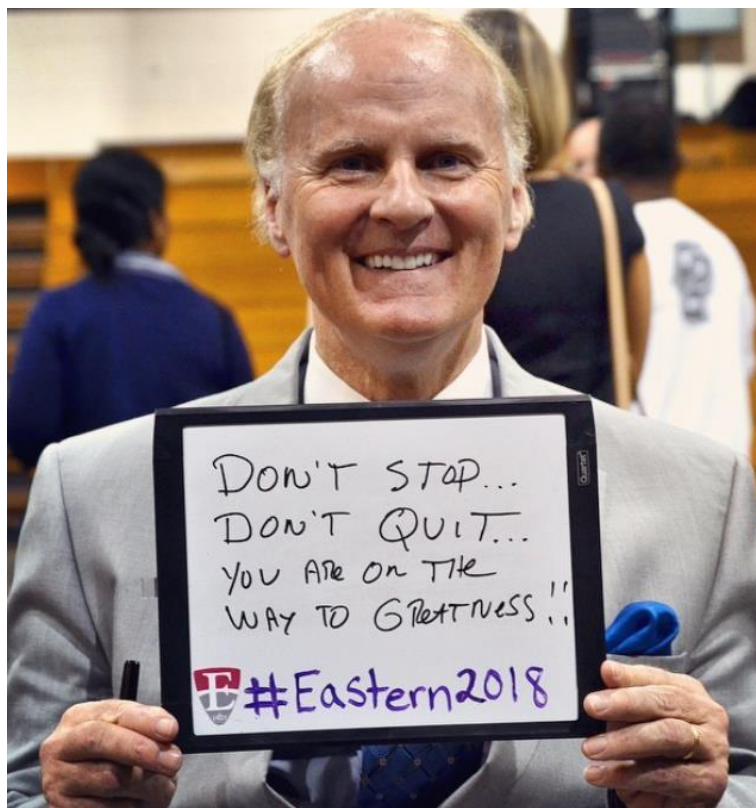
Narrative Summary:

We will recruit, select, develop and retain employees who are committed to our mission, dedicated to customer service, and equipped with God-given talents suitable to the needs of the University. Employees will be compensated equitably and reasonably, supervised with dignity and love, celebrated for job successes, and held accountable with evenhanded grace.

Goals:

In order to fulfill this imperative, Eastern University will:

- a) Cultivate a culture of Christian spiritual formation for our employees.
- b) Nurture an ethos of friendly, convenient, high quality service.
- c) Implement employee recruitment, retention, and development practices that reflect our foundational Christian commitments and foster diversity, creativity, and performance excellence.
- d) Develop a career path framework that aligns job roles and responsibilities with employee talents and strengths.



Strategic Imperative #7-Optimize Stewardship of University Resources

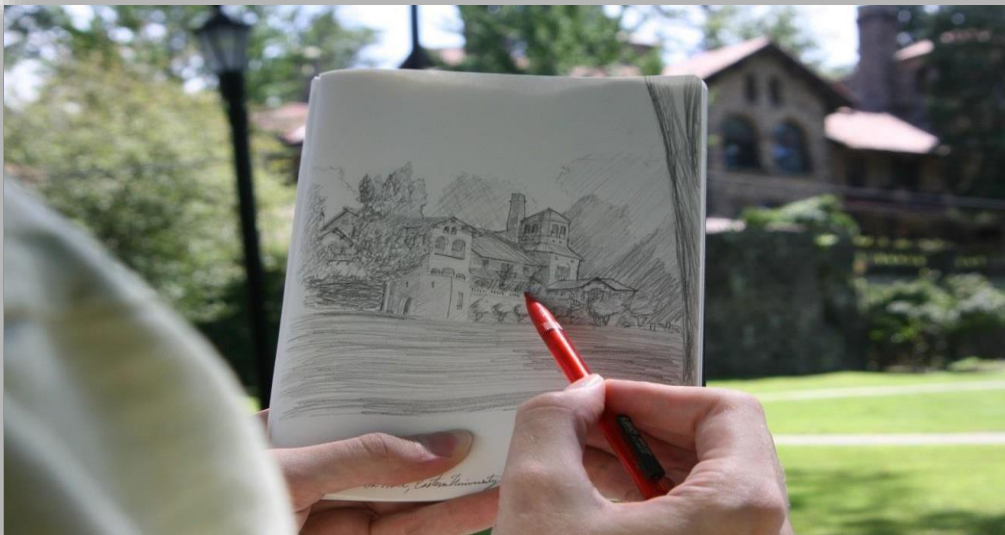
Narrative Summary:

We will optimize the stewardship of our financial resources and are especially committed to increasing margins to support and expand the University mission. We can accomplish this by being effective stewards of our resources through fiscal prudence and the strategic care and expansion of our buildings and grounds.

Goals:

In order to fulfill this imperative, Eastern University will:

- a) Increase net revenue.
- b) Demonstrably improve stewardship of resources.
- c) Leverage existing and emerging technologies to increase operational effectiveness and customer service.
- d) Evaluate the organizational structure of and systems within the University to strengthen quality and increase efficiency.
- e) Incentive academic units toward enrollment growth, quality and economic efficiency.
- f) Implement and complete Phase One of the Campus Master Plan.
- g) Develop and implement a plan to reduce university-wide risk.



Strategic Imperative #8-Complete the First Phase of a Comprehensive Advancement Campaign

Narrative Summary:

We will prepare, implement and complete the first phase of a comprehensive advancement campaign, which will be shaped by our academic, student life, campus master plan and theological vision. We will put in place the infrastructure in terms of staffing and volunteer leadership, which will be required to fuel our mission and vision through the next decade. This will require engaging our current donors, significantly expanding the base of our new donors and building a strong culture of philanthropy, both on and off campus in support of our mission.

Goals:

In order to fulfill this imperative, Eastern University will:

- a) Pursue annual, major, and deferred gifts and grant funding aggressively to fund our institutional plans and priorities.
- b) Significantly strengthen the infrastructure of our Advancement Office.
- c) Identify and build key relationships with alumni, parents, friends, faculty and staff, neighbors, foundations, corporations and others who will be essential to the success of this effort.
- d) Identify, cultivate and engage Board members and other key volunteers as stakeholders in our campaign.
- e) Enhance the Board of Trustees' ability to impact the campaign through engagement and improved Board composition.
- f) Work with the Board to determine the advisability of a campaign readiness study.

