



# **Transforming Our Future**

*Implementing Change in an Era of Innovation*

**Strategic Plan  
2018-2023**

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## **Message from the President**

Shepherd University has entered an era of historic change in higher education. Traditional structures and operations that worked well in the past will need to be reengineered for the future. Greater emphasis must be placed on creative and forward thinking to navigate the current and future challenges facing higher education. But while this necessitates that Shepherd become increasingly more innovative and resourceful, this change also ushers in an era of unparalleled opportunities.

As a regional public university, Shepherd University embraces and serves a broad range of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students by providing access to higher learning. During this time of dynamic change, Shepherd should continue to seek new, innovative approaches to enhance our identity, structure, operations, learning delivery methods, and resources associated with student learning and success, as we strengthen our foundation and shape our future for providing exceptional experiences for our students, employees, and partners.

With these challenges and opportunities in mind, my charge to the Strategic Planning Committee was to create a five-year strategic plan that will inform campus decision-making and fundraising priorities, resulting in a strong financial position. The plan will also serve as a strategic roadmap with implementation guidelines. Shepherd University must attain financial stability to provide a world-class liberal arts education for the next generation of professional leaders and model citizens and to serve as an educational resource for the community.

Thank you for being part of Shepherd and believing in the possibilities that will shape our future. Together, we can address our challenges and maybe have a little fun along the way!

With best wishes and great expectations,  
Mary J.C. Hendrix

## **The University Context and Environment**

The fundamental shifts that have transformed the higher education landscape over the past decade have been driven primarily by demographic, economic, cultural, and political influences.

Since 2011, many colleges and universities have experienced decreasing undergraduate student enrollments due to declining high school-aged student populations across the nation. Shepherd has been able to maintain strong enrollment numbers for in-state West Virginia students, but out-of-state enrollment has declined in direct proportion to the lower number of high school-aged students in Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. This dwindling market has led to unprecedented competition among colleges and universities and has driven the need for more scholarships and an increase in discount rates. Shepherd is no longer contending with only regional schools, but is now competing in a highly-coveted recruitment market with public, private, and proprietary institutions from across the entire eastern seaboard.

The demographic composition of traditional-aged students will change as well over the next decade with incoming student populations becoming more ethnically diverse. In addition, economic challenges are influencing students and families to question the value of earning a college degree, particularly when compared to the costs of attendance and related debt following graduation. Both of these factors will require the university to re-evaluate current learning models and continue to promote and enhance the value of a Shepherd degree to our current and future students.

Over the last five years, Shepherd has experienced a decline in full-time equivalent (FTE) students and a significant reduction in state appropriations. As the lowest funded public baccalaureate institution per FTE in West Virginia, Shepherd has become increasingly reliant on tuition, fee, and room and board revenue to fund basic operations as well as to fund operating cost increases. In order to achieve our mission, add new initiatives, and address deferred maintenance, Shepherd must develop a financial model that meets current needs, allows for investments in the future, and builds a contingency reserve.

## Mission

Shepherd University, a West Virginia public liberal arts university, is a diverse community of learners and a gateway to the world of opportunities and ideas. We are the regional center for academic, cultural, and economic opportunity. Our mission of service succeeds because we are dedicated to our core values: learning, engagement, integrity, accessibility, and community.

## Vision

Shepherd: A Premier Public Liberal Arts University

We will be a nationally respected community of learners where passion, purpose, and experience unite to inspire individuals to shape the world.

## Core Values

Committed to excellence, Shepherd University embraces the following five core values:

- **Learning**-Shepherd University creates a community of learners who integrate teaching, scholarship, and learning into their lives. In order to create challenging, relevant experiences, inside and outside of the classroom, the university continually evaluates and assesses various aspects of student learning. We recognize and accommodate diverse learning styles and perspectives necessary for global understanding.
- **Engagement**-Shepherd University fosters environments in which students, faculty, staff, and members of the community engage with each other to form mutually beneficial relationships. We believe that meaningful engagement, with ideas and with people, promotes deep learning and nurtures critical thought and dialogue.
- **Integrity**-Shepherd University strives for an environment of honesty and fairness in its actions. University officials seek input from students, faculty, and staff and make informed and objective decisions. We expect all members of the community to act in accordance with this core value.
- **Accessibility**-Shepherd University provides services to all qualified students. Our staff and faculty are available to students and are committed to respecting and meeting individual needs. University governance and budgeting structures reflect our commitment to transparent processes and public access to information.
- **Community**-Shepherd University comprises a community that includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, and involved citizens. We meet the needs of this community through assessment, development, and implementation of innovative programs and initiatives. We strive to create a safe environment based on mutual respect and acceptance of differences.

## **The Shepherd Image**

*Goal 1: Create a unified identity that clearly relays Shepherd University's distinctive brand of academic excellence and innovative spirit to prospective students, collaborative partners, and the greater community.*

### **Strategies**

- Develop an integrated marketing plan that creates a unified visual and communications identity.
- Strengthen and enhance strategic recruitment and enrollment efforts for in-state, out-of-state, and international undergraduate and graduate students.
- Position Shepherd University as a leading provider of academic, cultural, entrepreneurial, and continuing education opportunities.
- Develop innovative and collaborative solutions with the community, when appropriate, such as the co-development of academic programs, improvement of facilities, and identification of new funding sources.

## **The Student Experience**

*Goal 2: Empower and support Shepherd's increasingly diverse student body as they pursue a rigorous and transformative education that includes academic experiences beyond the classroom, preparing them for ongoing and future academic growth and a successful career path.*

### **Strategies**

- Ensure that qualified students—regardless of financial, academic, or environmental obstacles—have the ability to enroll, persist, and succeed at Shepherd.
- Offer a flexible, high-quality education that accommodates varied learners through traditional, evening, weekend, summer, and online course structures.
- Provide enhanced academic advisement that ensures students will be able to successfully navigate the requirements for graduation.
- Strengthen access to and from Shepherd through increased partnership agreements with high schools, community colleges, and professional and graduate schools.
- Expand internship and career-related opportunities, preparing our students as professionals in a global, competitive workforce.

## **The Employee Experience**

**Goal 3:** *Encourage, recognize, and reward faculty and staff for their contributions to the University's mission, within a collaborative working environment that fosters academic freedom and professional growth.*

### **Strategies**

- In conjunction with institutional financial indicators, create benchmarks for offering salary and merit increases for all faculty and staff.
- Offer alternative benefits to improve work/life balance such as telecommuting, tuition remission for dependents and spouses, and childcare.
- Encourage faculty innovation that incorporates new instructional techniques and learning modalities that increase opportunities for Shepherd's diverse student body.
- Create increased professional development opportunities for staff and faculty that enrich the profile of the institution.

## **The Campus Environment**

**Goal 4:** *Establish a financially stable and environmentally sustainable foundation on which to grow the institution.*

### **Strategies**

- Focus on creating a sustainable campus and a mindset of energy conservation and recycling practices, as well as electronic solutions for internal business processes.
- Diversify income streams and enhance budgets with extramural funding through grants, sponsored research, fundraising initiatives, public-private partnerships, and potential lease and rental agreements.
- Evaluate and adjust academic and administrative structures to meet current and future demands.
- Continue to work in alliance with the Shepherd University Foundation to support university-community partnerships.
- Ensure the efficient use of campus facilities and assets.

## Moving Forward

Shepherd University's strategic plan is just the starting point. Reaching and exceeding our strategic goals will hinge on full participation from stakeholders across the campus community and our strategic partners. The next three steps, as we move from the planning phase to the action phase, are implementation, measures and metrics, and outcome assessment:

- Implementation teams, aligned with the strategic goals, will be formed and include stakeholders from all divisions at all levels across the university. Strategic goals and implementation strategies will be aligned with current operations in order to make timely forward progress.
- Existing and new measures and metrics will need to be defined and documented.
- An implementation timeline and schedule of annual assessment will be developed to serve as a guide for staying on-course as we collectively move through the lifecycle of the strategic plan.

Information will be shared publicly throughout the lifecycle with the campus community and may also be tracked at the Strategic Plan website: <http://www.shepherd.edu/strategic-plan/>

## Strategic Planning Committee

William Sommers, Chair	Vice President for Enrollment Management
Evora Baker	Assistant Director, TRiO Upward Bound Program
Scott Beard	Acting Provost
Cara Burkner	Clinical Faculty in Nursing Education
Sonya Evanisko	Professor of Art
Tuncer Gocmen	Professor of Economics and Finance
Tim Haines	Director of Marketing and Digital Strategy
Brian Hammond	IT Administrative Analyst and Budget Officer
Stacey Kendig	Chair and Acting Co-Dean, HPERs
Ramona Kissel	Administrative Assistant, College of Business
Christopher Lovelace	President, Faculty Senate
Aniqua Lower	Student Representative
Cecelia Mason	Staff Writer, University Communications
Keerthana Mesineni	Student Representative
Colleen Nolan	Professor of Biology
Laura Renninger	Dean, Center for Teaching, Learning and Instructional Resources
Richard Stevens	Acting Dean, Graduate Studies and Continuing Education
Meredith Wait	Community Member
Ralph Wojtowicz	Associate Professor of Mathematics