



Boldly Bonaventure



Strategic Plan
2021-2026

A photograph of several students in a classroom or library setting. In the foreground, a young woman and a young man are looking at a tablet held by the woman. They are both smiling and appear to be engaged in a collaborative learning activity. In the background, other students are visible, some looking at their phones. The lighting is warm and the atmosphere is focused and positive.

Transformative *and* Exceptional

In 1858, Franciscan friars joined with a generous lay benefactor, Nicholas Devereux, and Bishop John Timon to begin a bold community of learning in Western New York. They built a college on the key Franciscan insight that education should be transformative of the whole human person. Seeking to integrate the heart, the will, the mind and body as the task of education, our founders believed that the great value of a Bonaventure education would lie not simply in acquiring practical theories and skills, but in gaining the wisdom to live truly humanly, deeply, and well in the world. They began a college that would be distinguished by its commitment to liberal learning and character formation rooted in key Franciscan convictions:

- that God and creation are good,
- that every human being is an image of God;
- that human beings are created to live in relationship;
- and that we are to share the good gifts of God with others, especially those who find themselves on the margins of society.

Because of this positive foundation, St. Bonaventure University is committed to the personal and academic development of every student. St. Bonaventure University is blessed with a faculty committed to scholarship, research and teaching in the Franciscan intellectual tradition. We live in what has been called an “age of accelerations,” where the volume and velocity of change impact every sector of our lives (personal, social, economic, psychological and spiritual) simultaneously and with unprecedented force. Our students must be ready to enter a global world that will demand skills of understanding, assimilation, integration, interpretation, and action at orders and speed that no other generation has yet had to face. To prepare our students, the University must be bold, positive, proactive and mission-based.

Our strategic plan is rooted in St. Bonaventure University’s Franciscan mission and its key values.

Our Franciscan Mission

St. Bonaventure is a Catholic university dedicated to educational excellence as informed by our Franciscan and liberal arts traditions.

In the words of our patron, we believe that there should be “no knowledge without love,” and thus seek to transform the lives of our students, inspiring in them a lifelong commitment to service and citizenship.

St. Bonaventure embraces students, faculty and staff of all faiths and cultures and strives to bring out the best in every individual through meaningful relationships. As an academic and spiritual community, we endeavor to prepare our students for the challenges they will face in their professional careers and personal lives.



We are a community



Our Franciscan community affirms the unique dignity of everyone, each person reflecting the goodness of God, and invites all of our sisters and brothers to forge bonds of mutual acceptance and understanding that create a true sense of belonging. We nurture **COMPASSION**, seek **WISDOM** and build **INTEGRITY**.



OUR CORE VALUES

Compassion

We are convinced that all of creation is God's gift, an awareness that calls forth a sense of solidarity with everyone and everything. As images of God, we strive to share God's unconditional love, particularly with those on the margins of society — the needy, the ignored, and the excluded.

Wisdom

We are convinced that education must be transformative of the whole person, concerned not only with the intellect, but also with the will, the heart, and the body. Education must be eminently practical, not just about learning concepts and skills, but discerning how to truly live humanly, deeply, and well in the world.

Integrity

We are convinced that each of us must accept responsibility for our actions and that our relationships should be based on respect for the dignity of others, honesty, and transparency, realizing that the values we espouse mean little unless they are embodied in our personal and professional lives.

Bonaventure Proud

There is every reason to be proud of St. Bonaventure's legacy and confident in its position. We have a strong and deeply committed community of faculty, staff, students, friars and alumni who believe in St. Bonaventure's Franciscan educational mission. We care about one another and take pride in the common good that binds us and challenges us. We offer exceptional residential and virtual campus environments that prioritize both personalized education and social engagement, individual achievement and community bonds, liberal arts, professional learning, and our students' personal and spiritual growth.

Over the past five years, we have created a distinct practice of strategic thinking that has spawned new and creative initiatives in business, health care, education, communications and the liberal arts and sciences, as well as in faculty development and student services. We foster academic excellence, professional competence and ethical values in all we do. We are building a strong, motivated and mission-based community of learning.

Those outside the University have begun to notice. Recently, Buffalo's Business First, the premier business publication in Western New York, named St. Bonaventure University a company of the year for 2020. The honor cited the university's ability to "buck local and national trends and continue an enrollment surge that's the envy of many other institutions."

Despite continuing challenges in higher education and the uncertainty that arose in spring 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, total enrollment at St. Bonaventure was up 5% from 2019-20, "continuing a five-year upswing that equals 26% more students enrolled than five years ago."

St. Bonaventure University has built a solid foundation for the future. At the same time, we recognize the significant challenges that must be addressed if we are to offer the kind of exceptional educational experience that will transform our students into engaged global citizens in the world they will be called to lead.

The research that accompanies this plan convinces us that, beyond the lessons learned from our country's traumatic experience with the COVID pandemic and its resultant economic recession, we must recognize the trends affecting higher education in general and St. Bonaventure University in particular.

What our research indicates ...



Student Demographics

The population of high school graduates is in a period of decline. This decline is expected to be even more pronounced in our traditional undergraduate recruitment areas by 2025.

Financial Resources

The demographic makeup of traditional undergraduates is shifting and will require more financial resources to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students.

Affordability

As a tuition-driven institution, SBU is, and will continue to remain, vulnerable to market fluctuations and the unstable dynamics of competition on price.

Non-Traditional Education

Market opportunities exist for adult, non-traditional learners.

Student Experience

The student experience will require more flexible learning and support systems.

Student Outcomes

It is imperative that institutions recognize and respond to the increasing importance students and families are placing on outcomes.

Collegiate Athletics

Competitiveness and financial sustainability will be extremely difficult to achieve in the collegiate athletic environment.

Mission

To compete and survive, institutions must embed a determined experience of mission throughout governance, programs and community to guide decision making and accountability.

Strategic Thinking

Higher education institutions must be agile, strategic and innovative in order to thrive in its current environment.

Financial Position

The financial picture of small, private, tuition driven higher education institutions remains fragile.

These are the **challenges** we face

Failure to address them in the coming years in a strategic and integrated way will threaten the University's vibrancy and its ability to provide a rigorous educational experience for students in the future.

The commitments, priorities and strategies provided in this plan offer a blueprint for an effective engagement with our mission as well as with the opportunities and challenges we face. In this plan, the strategic commitments define our sense of purpose at this time.

The strategic priorities express our vision of the kind of University we can become with sustained energy and effort. The strategies indicate how to proceed if we are to be faithful to our convictions and commitments. Therefore, this strategic plan is the beginning of a new bold and exciting period in Bonaventure's history.

It is important to note that these commitments, priorities and strategies cannot be considered or responded to in isolation from one another. They are interconnected and interdependent because they emerge from complex educational and societal factors that link external forces and internal circumstances.

In the months to come, it will be the responsibility of each department and unit of the University to translate these priorities and strategies into actionable tactics that will unite the Bonaventure community in a common good for a flourishing future.



Developing a Franciscan mission-driven institutional culture focused on innovation, agility and strategic thinking

Change is not an option in higher education today. The question is whether the wisdom, power and effectiveness of our change will meet the complexities that face our students, faculty and staff.

We want to become the leading comprehensive Franciscan university in the country, rooted in Franciscan mission and integrating in one institution the high standards of both liberal arts education and professional learning.

We believe that our first step in accelerating academic excellence, professional development, world-class learning and transformative student experiences is by grounding ourselves in a mission-driven culture that puts a premium on individual dignity and social bonds, personal achievement and the common good, inclusion and diversity, critical thinking and ethical accountability.

This means, that as a Franciscan University, we are committed to scholarly research and rigorous scientific inquiry, holistic personal development, cultural inclusion and systemic justice. We focus on strengthening our Franciscan mission, improving our agility and strategic thinking, finding new ways to deliver courses that satisfy our liberal arts tradition and our business environment today.

The trends we have identified in our research will not be solved by antiquated methods of doing “educational business.” We must perform with greater transparency, equity, accountability, dialogue and compassion.

Therefore, we intend to ...



Become the leading comprehensive Franciscan University in the country

Become a University community that's a leader in diversity, equity and inclusion

Accelerate our development of a culture of planning, innovation, focus & agility at all levels of the institution

Developing a Franciscan mission-driven institutional culture focused on innovation, agility and strategic thinking

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES
Become a university community that is a leader in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)	<p>Refine policies in each division and school to ensure a DEI focus through accountability and rewards.</p> <p>Transform into a proactive culture that invests in DEI from student recruitment to graduation to faculty/staff and the curriculum and across campus that is invigorated by a chief diversity officer, DEI office and financial support.</p> <p>Require ongoing DEI development and training for faculty, staff and students.</p>
Become the leading comprehensive Franciscan university in the country	<p>Strategically grow and shape the University's enrollment to 3,000 headcount students by attracting new/different populations of graduate and undergraduate students through initiatives like the establishment of a satellite campus, the creation of a new academic school, research-based programming or increased growth in the SBU Digital Campus and other graduate programs.</p> <p>Build strong local and global presence by fostering mission-driven undergraduate experiences and graduate international partnerships that are consistent with St. Bonaventure's Franciscan mission and values.</p>
Accelerate our development of a culture of planning, innovation, focus and agility at all levels of the institution	<p>To develop an office of institutional planning and effectiveness to achieve integrated, aligned planning and decision making in ways that cut across organizational silos, based on University mission, vision and values.</p>

Fostering transformative academic excellence across the institution

The cultural, political, and demographic shifts of the past few decades, including the crises generated in the pandemic of 2020, have put considerable pressure on higher education in general, but even more directly on small, private colleges like our own.

The competition for students, even in once secure markets, has become intense – strained by the pressure to keep standards high, costs relatively low, and student engagement calibrated to real life benefits.

We know that our prospective Bonaventure families look primarily to our commitment to academic excellence in making their decision about whether to invest in us. Academic excellence today must be transformative, global, integrated, experiential, and interdisciplinary.

St. Bonaventure is committed to building this “whole person in a global world” perspective with individuals equipped in multiple modes of learning, adept in critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning, ever-mindful of their ethical responsibilities in the world.

Therefore, we intend to ...

Enhance our academic reputation for integrated, evidenced based, experiential, interdisciplinary and high-quality learning

Prepare our students for success in a complex global context with a transformational educational experience

Support academic programs that are competitive in the market and/or consistent with our mission



Fostering transformative academic excellence across the institution

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES
Prepare our students for success in a complex global context with a transformational educational experience	<p>Enhance transformational educational experiences for our students that build on intra-institutional partnerships.</p> <p>Integrate globally focused, action-oriented experiences in all dimensions of our students' education.</p>
Enhance our academic reputation for integrated, evidenced-based, experiential, interdisciplinary, and high-quality learning	<p>Prioritize and invest in faculty success and reputation through pedagogical improvements, differentiated faculty role definitions, and new faculty reward structures.</p> <p>Enhance academic rigor and student learning by increasing the level of academic challenge while addressing systemic inequalities.</p> <p>Improve student success outcomes through better and more consistent academic advising, post-graduation tracking and increased emphasis on employment/graduate school preparation.</p>
Accelerate our development of a culture of planning, innovation, focus and agility at all levels of the institution	<p>Systematically evaluate, adjust and improve the University's academic program offerings to ensure mission alignment and effective use of institutional resources.</p>

Cultivating a student population and experience characterized by diversity, equity, inclusion and excellence

St. Bonaventure provides its transformative and exceptional educational experience by fostering and building an intentional community of learning and development, where students share their insights and hopes and where they debate their ideas and ideals in a free and open discourse in search of the “fount of truth.” We respect, support and protect the diversity of students.

St. Bonaventure University deepens its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. We know that there can be no true community of learning and development in an atmosphere of bias or under conditions of racial or cultural injustice of any sort. This insight is rooted in our university’s faith commitment in God and the human person in the image and likeness of God.

Our community is an inclusive and equitable environment where every individual can thrive. We have already committed to building a “culture of students first” to highlight the importance of attending carefully to our students’ intellectual, social, psychological, cultural, racial, and spiritual needs. We embrace and support people of all races, faiths, and traditions. We strive to give them a feeling of welcome and belonging as full members of our community.

We build on that commitment by fostering a greater awareness, understanding, and respect for all people’s perspectives, and locating areas of campus that need more specific attention and more sensitive responses. We strengthen this commitment by reinforcing an institution-wide application of Franciscan mission-based ethics in all that we do as a university.

Therefore, we intend to ...

Provide a holistic and integrated student educational experience to further facilitate post-graduation success

Foster success among diverse student populations through enrollment, academic practices and support systems that enhance the quality of the learning environment

Reinforce institution-wide application of mission-based ethics and a student-centered culture in all programs and practices



Cultivating a student population and experience characterized by diversity, equity, inclusion and excellence

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES
Provide a holistic and integrated student educational experience to facilitate post-graduation success	<p>Enhance how the alumni base is leveraged to support student preparation for post-graduation success.</p> <p>Implement a program to highlight and develop student organizational roles that will build transferable skills for post-graduation success.</p> <p>Grow our student mentorship program and broaden it to include all portions of the student lifecycle.</p>
Foster success among diverse student populations through enrollment, academic practices and support systems that enhance the quality of the learning environment	<p>The university will create an office of diversity, equity and inclusion dedicated to coordinating, overseeing, and assessing initiatives, development opportunities, and resources for students, faculty and staff.</p> <p>The university will work to ensure the faculty and staff promote best practices in DEI in areas including recruitment, hiring and onboarding of new employees and professional development and training for current employees.</p> <p>The university will adapt and/or develop physical and virtual spaces, according to the principles of universal design, that are functionally and physically accessible and that provide each student with spaces in which they are welcome and with students with whom they have affinities.</p>
Reinforce institution-wide application of mission-based ethics and a student-centered culture in all programs and practices	<p>Develop and utilize a common understanding of Franciscan language and mission-based ethics to inform University policies and decision making at all levels.</p> <p>Consistent with our Franciscan values, every student's educational experience will be the priority for all that we do.</p> <p>Provide all students, staff and faculty opportunities for shared common experiences in the Franciscan tradition that develop their personal and professional lives.</p>

Creating a sustainable future through the responsible stewardship of St. Bonaventure's financial, natural, human and other resources

The financial strain on private colleges and universities, especially those in rural parts of the country, are significant.

A downturn in the economy, a generational shift in demographics, new regulations from federal or state agencies, and new accreditation procedures can easily disrupt even the best financial forecasts.

It is the task of a conscientious educational institution today to be prepared with responsible stewardship, so that all of the University's assets (financial, natural, human and others) are protected and developed.

We seek to develop an "integral financial ecology" beginning with a new financial model, consistent with our mission, which is sustainable, transparent, accountable, and participatory and that supports solidarity and innovation.

This integral financial ecology begins with the value of persons in relationship and seeks to promote and enhance their holistic well-being and professional excellence.

Therefore, we intend to ...

Ensure the continued sustainability of our athletic program and enhance its competitiveness

Build a financial model that is sustainable, transparent, accountable, and participatory and that supports solidarity and innovation

Promote and demonstrate the holistic well-being and professional excellence of all our employees, and be recognized as an employer of choice



Creating a sustainable future through the responsible stewardship of St. Bonaventure's financial, natural, human and other resources

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES
Build a financial model that is sustainable, transparent, accountable, and participatory and that supports solidarity and innovation	<p>Engage appropriate and cross-institutional stakeholders to develop a sustainable financial model & plan, short and long term, that supports the institution's strategic plan with periodic assessment and thorough communication to the campus community.</p> <p>Utilize internal and external data to inform the strategic allocation of University resources across all academic and administrative units and adjust the organizational structure as needed.</p> <p>Use evidence-based assessment to determine resource allocation, support</p>
Ensure the continued sustainability of our athletic program and enhance competitiveness	<p>Define and prioritize the total welfare of our student athletes.</p> <p>Create a culture of assessment that focuses on sustainability and competitiveness.</p>
Promote and demonstrate the holistic well-being and professional excellence of all our employees, and be recognized as an employer of choice	<p>Continuously improve and align rewards and compensation systems to support institutional priorities and show that employees are an integral part of SBU's success.</p> <p>Create, implement and manage predictable, consistent and relevant communication programs and tactics that inform and promote the unique and enriching aspects of being part of the SBU community.</p> <p>Develop, implement and evaluate employee enrichment opportunities that are impactful, point-of-need, and focused on employee well-being and effectiveness.</p>

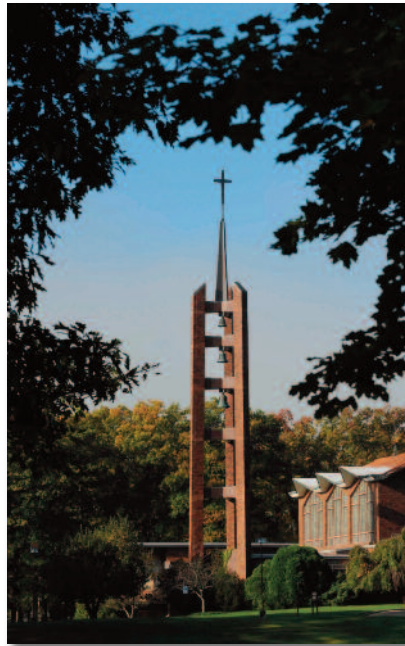
Boldly Bonaventure

Bold. Transformational. Exceptional. Proud. Successful. Innovative.

When Franciscan friars and a small cohort of students came together on this campus more than 160 years ago, the times were tough but their hopes were expansive. They offered advanced education based on four simple values of community, compassion, integrity and wisdom.

Their dream has become a great university that offers undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences, business, communications, education and health professions. The University continues to innovate to serve new generations of students who will enter a marketplace that is constantly changing but always requiring fresh insights, critical analysis, technical skills, astute reasoning and ethical bearings.

It is time for a bold response to the challenges and opportunities we face. This strategic plan boldly commits to our Franciscan mission and heritage, continued innovation and a new culture of strategic thinking. It commits itself not simply to continuing our renowned Bonaventure academic excellence but to transforming it to meet the complexities of the times in which we live. We will accelerate the high standards of scholarship that will set our students apart.



This plan recognizes that our students will need new forms of support to meet the challenges of higher education today. It is a support that must confront stereotypes and biases in whatever form and from whatever direction they arise.


We cannot be a healthy society or community of learners as long as exclusion is tolerated in our world, however unconsciously. Our Franciscan mission calls us to take pride in the diversity that comes from our experience as sisters and brothers of a good and gracious God.

This plan provides for a stable financial future and a financial plan that supports institutional priorities. We have the opportunity and now the will to create a financial model that stewards our resources and helps us to grow programs that energize and enthuse new students, faculty and staff well into the future.

It takes a bold imagination to believe that we can become transformative and exceptional in these difficult times. It also takes a bold intent to carry this plan forward into every unit and department of this great University.

It's time to build a bolder, better Bonaventure — together.

Acknowledgements



In the summer of 2019, University President Dr. Dennis DePerro invited the campus community into a new process to develop the next strategic plan for the University. He reconstituted the University Planning Commission (UPC) to lay the groundwork for this plan and charged it with the following tasks:

- reviewing progress on the strategic initiatives underway;
- identifying and helping move forward strategic initiatives that are planned for future years;
- fostering a culture of planning across the University;
- developing a strategic vision for the University that moves beyond the strategic plan.

In August 2019, the UPC engaged the campus at its fall convocation with a presentation on the progress of the 57 initiatives initiated and completed in the previous plan. It also surveyed the community on challenges and opportunities moving forward. Based on this survey and in discussions with university leaders, the UPC identified eight research topics and broke into sub-teams to answer those questions and develop a library of strategic research to guide our analysis moving forward.

Based on the work of our research teams, the UPC identified 10 strategic trends facing the Uni-

versity that needed to be addressed in the upcoming strategic plan. In February of 2020, the UPC presented the research questions and strategic trends to the campus community and sought its advice on possible strategic commitments and priorities. Discussions followed across the campus and with university leadership.

In the spring of 2020, the UPC worked on identifying four strategic commitments and twelve strategic priorities. Task forces for each were organized. More than 100 people became involved in these task forces

In August 2020, the UPC presented the strategic commitments and priorities to the campus community to gauge the level of support for the work and direction that the UPC was undertaking. In the fall of 2020, the task forces submitted draft strategies to the UPC for its discussion, analysis and review.

After consultation with the President and his Senior Executive Management Team and the President's Council, the UPC merged the strategies into a draft strategy matrix.

This plan was reviewed by the Board of Trustees and suggestions offered at its December 2020 meeting. The plan was formally adopted by the Board of Trustees on June 4, 2021.

University Planning Commission

The St. Bonaventure University community acknowledges with gratitude all of the members of UPC (below) and the Planning Task Force teams (next page) who provided significant time, energy and expertise to our strategic planning process. *(Titles listed here are from the date of the plan's adoption.)*

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ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY