

A photograph of the College of Our Lady of the Elms campus. The main building is a large, multi-story red brick structure with a prominent central clock tower featuring Gothic-style windows and a clock face. The building is surrounded by lush green trees and a well-maintained lawn. In the foreground, there is a low green hedge and a paved walkway. The sky is clear and blue.

College of Our Lady of the Elms

Strategic Plan 2021- 2023

Bridges to The Elms Plus (+) Experience

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



President's Message



Harry E. Dumay, Ph.D., MBA
11th President of Elms College

The most successful organizations start by articulating why they exist. In that spirit, Elms College used the opportunity presented by our strategic planning process to reaffirm our purpose: Elms College bridges the path between where our students are and where they want to be, by preparing them for the fulfilled and purposeful lives that they desire to lead for themselves and their Dear Neighbor.

During the past academic year, almost all members of the Elms College community contributed to elaborating this strategic plan, in which we present how our college community intends to fulfill our stated purpose over the next three years.

When we launched Elms College's strategic planning endeavor in the fall of 2019, we knew that this exercise needed to be anything but routine. The College was faced with both significant peril and promise. The COVID-19 pandemic made that statement even truer and more urgent. Following a successful and safe reopening of the campus in the fall of 2020, the college is excited to present this strategic plan which positions us to continue to live up to our founders' aspiration for Elms to be an ever more vibrant and supportive learning environment for the very diverse students whom we serve.

While this strategic plan is grounded in a deep understanding of the forces at play for the future of higher education both regionally and globally, its scope is purposefully limited to the next three academic years. A short and focused timeline provides us the agility that will undoubtedly be necessary for the changes that the environment will inevitably present. A necessary first step in this planning effort, however, was a clear-eyed assessment of the threats and opportunities for Elms in the current environment.

To be plain about it, there is an increasing level of skepticism from many sectors in the ability of small, non-wealthy, private colleges to survive, let alone thrive. The evidence that is fueling this attitude stems from a reduced enrollment pool of high school students, the number of small colleges which have closed or merged recently, and the financial impact of ensuring additional health and safety measures caused by the ongoing pandemic.

At the same time, the possibilities for Elms College are evident in both tangible and intangible ways. The College has functioned with a balanced budget for the past decade; in outcome measures such as retention and graduation rates, the college ranks above peers. Recent graduates are employed and, when given an opportunity to stack up against those from more elite institutions, Elms College students perform remarkably well. The college's most recent initiatives have received widespread support and praise both within and outside the institution.

In this plan are the priorities that the college will pursue with vigor, within the constraints of a small faculty and staff and limited budgets. The strategic plan demonstrates that the return on these investments will be significantly positive in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

The ultimate intangible return of this strategic plan will be to ensure that the essence of an Elms education, which has marked the lives of generations of students in a uniquely transformative way, is available for generations more to come.

After nearly a year of comprehensive collaboration through listening sessions and surveys with faculty, staff, and students, information gathering by subcommittees, and benchmarking, Elms College has developed **five critical strategic areas** to lead our efforts as we move forward in line with our mission, vision and values.

1

Excel

in Academics

- Build a robust faculty mentoring and development program, including the needs of diverse faculty.
- Ensure that distinctive elements of an Elms education are incorporated into all academic programming.
- Implement a comprehensive plan for the innovative delivery of ElmsFlex programs with a commitment to accessibility for all students.
- Maintain a continued focus on identified academic program priorities.
- Identify new academic program opportunities for planning, resource allocation and launch.

2

Expand

Experiential Learning

- Advance EL at Elms and oversee the Keating Schneider Fund and the Elms Internship Advantage Experience Fund.
- Establish the position of Director of Experiential Learning.
- Increase the number and types of Experiential Learning opportunities available.
- Create a pathway for Experiential Learning throughout the Elms Plus Experience from day one through graduation.
- Make Experiential Learning accessible for all students.

3

Elevate

Ethical Leadership

- Develop a comprehensive plan to infuse ethics and ethical leadership development into all academic and co-curricular programs, and the liberal arts core.
- Institute Ethical Leadership development as a hallmark feature of the Elms Plus Experience, that will distinguish the College regionally and nationally.
- Establish the Center for Ethics, Religion and Culture as the visible manifestation of the College's commitment to our Catholic Identity and contemporary academic and public engagement.

4

Engage

Our Learning Community

- Build a diverse, equitable and inclusive campus through increased underrepresented student enrollment and faculty and staff hiring and retention.
- Empower students through leadership roles effecting positive changes in the college, local communities, and the world.
- Carry on the legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph by engaging students learning through spirituality and service to the Dear Neighbor.
- Improve living and learning environments in the residence halls, classrooms and flexible affinity spaces.

5

Enhance

Sustainability

- Increase undergraduate enrollment pool geographically and with fully online/non-traditional students.
- Increase student retention of academically underprepared, residential, and underrepresented populations.
- Increase graduate enrollment.
- Increase student athlete enrollment by modernizing athletic facilities.
- Augment and track fiscal stability of the College.
- Boost donor funding through a multi-year comprehensive capital campaign.



EXCEL in Academics

At the core of an Elms College education, and the Elms Plus Experience, are high-quality academic programs tied to a strong and distinctive liberal arts experience. To the community as well, these programs must be accessible to a diversity of students, must include in-class and experiential learning opportunities, and through discipline-specific and liberal experiences, must prepare students for 21st century careers.

To expand and enhance Academic Programs, we will develop and sustain distinctive academic programs of excellence by meeting these objectives:

- Build a robust faculty mentoring and development program, including the needs of diverse faculty.
- Ensure that distinctive elements of an Elms education are incorporated into all academic programming, including internships and other experiential learning, ethical leadership development, innovative and creative thinking, data literacy and research skills.
- Implement a comprehensive plan for the innovative delivery of ElmsFlex programs with a commitment to accessibility for all students.
- Maintain a continued focus on identified **academic program priorities**:
 1. **Equity in Urban Education**, including
Bachelor's degree completion programs in Education, ESL, Moderate Disabilities and STEM
Accelerated Master of Arts in Teaching in (MAT)
Administrator Licensure program
 2. **Global Health**, including
Haiti Nursing Professional Development Program
Online graduate certificate program in Global Health
Kochi Graduate Student Exchange Initiative
 3. **Biomedical Sciences and Biotechnology**, including
BS in Biotechnology
BA in Life Sciences
MS in Biotechnology
Data Science and Analytics (Bioinformatics, Health Data Informatics, Biostatistics)
 4. **Innovation and Entrepreneurship**, including
Business programming that prepares the ethical and innovative business leaders of the future
Infuse innovative and entrepreneurial thinking as a distinctive feature of an Elms College Liberal Arts education
 5. **Distinctive Ethical Leadership** programs, including:
MA in Bioethics and Medical Humanities
Doctorate in Bioethics and Medical Humanities
Undergraduate programs in Ethical Leadership
 6. **Identify new academic program opportunities** for planning, resource allocation and launch:
Computer Science and Data Analytics
Communication Sciences and Disorders
 7. **High Impact** programs (student demand, enrollment, revenue), including:
Engineering in select areas, software, biotechnology
High Demand healthcare programs, PA, OT, PT
Opportunities for programming that will build off of areas of academic strengths.



EXPAND Experiential Learning

Guided by our mission, Elms College is dedicated to student success and prides itself on providing students with real-world experiences that prepare individuals for careers or graduate school and to become lifelong learners. Through Experiential Learning (EL) opportunities, students will practice ethical decision making and gain employment skills, aligned with their academic program and career of interest. Transformative learning by action in real-world settings, along with reflecting on what they have learned, will better prepare students for success after graduation.

To expand Experiential Learning Opportunities, we will:

Provide leadership and structure to support Experiential Learning by:

- Strengthening an Experiential Learning Steering Committee to advance EL at Elms and oversee the Keating Schneider Fund and the Elms Internship Advantage Experience Fund for students.
- Establishing a position of Director of Experiential Learning (EL) to understand what EL is currently happening, utilize best practices for EL development and create assessment models for EL.
- Raising awareness about the range of Experiential Learning opportunities available and the outcomes contributing to success by marketing these opportunities to ALL current students, prospective students and their families to learn how EL is part of a distinctive Elms education.

Create a pathway for Experiential Learning throughout the Elms Plus Experience from day one through graduation through:

- Mission-aligned incoming student programs such as Dorothy Day, the Innovation Challenge as an integral part of First Year Seminar, the Sophomore Leadership Program, a Junior-level Career and Communication Development course, and senior participation in an Experiential Learning Festival.
- Annual Experiential Learning Festival to showcase students' EL and the community partners.
- Increased alumni involvement to expand opportunities for student internships, career mentoring and workshops.
- Experiential Learning requirement for graduation built into each major through a Pathways Portfolio.

Make Experiential Learning accessible for all students by:

- Equitably offering KSF and EAI stipends to students doing EL.
- Providing transportation for EL opportunities.
- Increasing the number of Experiential Learning Opportunities through faculty and staff professional development workshops across all disciplines and Faculty Experiential Learning Teaching (FELT) grants.

Select technology to:

- Establish a central EL data management tracking system.
- Provide formative and summative assessment tools for students, staff and faculty.
- Build a portfolio to showcase each student's experiential learning opportunity.



ELEVATE

Ethical Leadership

Through the Center for Ethics, Religion, and Culture, the College will develop a comprehensive plan, based on Catholic Social Teaching and encompassing First-year Seminar through graduation, to infuse ethics and ethical leadership development into all academic and co-curricular programs, and the liberal arts core. Ethical Leadership development will become a hallmark feature of the Elms Plus Experience, and will distinguish the College regionally and nationally.

Preparing ethical leaders is a core function of Elms College, and is an essential component for the College to meet its mission and vision of empowering students to effect positive changes in the community and in the world. The Center for Ethics, Religion and Culture (CERC) is the visible manifestation of the College's commitment to our Catholic Identity and contemporary academic and public engagement with ethics, religion, spirituality, and culture. It will accomplish this through:

- Creating and implementing CERC programming, starting in 2020-2021, as an essential step in effectively infusing ethics and ethical leadership development across all programs.
- Developing a concise definition, at novice, intermediate, and mastery levels, of what we mean by ethics and ethical leadership.
- Implementing tangible expressions of the importance of ethical development to the Elms community. Core values should be expressed as part of what we mean by ethical leadership.

Elms College will develop principled and ethical leaders as a distinctive feature of the Elms Liberal Arts Core through incorporating the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, spanning the entire student experience from orientation to graduation, and including robust learning outcomes and assessment.

To infuse Ethical development into all programs at Elms College, we will:

- Develop a training and professional development program for faculty on embedding ethical decision-making and ethical development into coursework and the curriculum.
- Expand co-curricular service-learning opportunities for students.
- Develop and implement a curricular framework that is fulfilled at each point in a student's development (first year, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate) that includes every major having an explicit formation development experience in applied ethics.
- Develop and implement interdisciplinary and collaborative programming within Elms and with community organizations.
- Develop and formalize additional relationships with local healthcare systems as healthcare-related bioethics and medical humanities programming is planned and developed.
- Develop and formalize additional relationships with community practitioners as ethical programming for other disciplines (business, education, etc.) is planned and developed.

Distinctive new academic programming in Ethics will be created, and will:

- Expand Bioethics and Medical Humanities (BMH) Programming, including master's, certificate, and doctoral programming.
- Launch an undergraduate minor in Ethical Leadership.
- Develop and implement the plan for total integration of Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Ethics undergraduate programming, including the exploration of a joint major or minor.

4

ENGAGE Our Learning Community

In keeping with the Elms College Mission statement, an Engaged Learning Community will serve to educate and provide opportunities for a diverse group of women and men in both a liberal arts education and in preparation for their future vocation. The community will empower students to engage in leadership roles to effect positive changes in the college, local communities, and the world.

Elms College seeks to foster an institutional environment that promotes healthy bodies and healthy minds—an environment for students to thrive in every respect. It is essential for Elms College to carry on the legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph by striving to create a holistic experience that engages students in learning through all aspects of the Elms College campus experience. This comprehensive, holistic experience emphasizes our desire for students to grow through faith, community, justice, and excellence. Our students are critical and conscientious learners who will develop the commitment, discipline, and vision necessary for lifelong learning, engagement, and development.

To engage our learning community, we will:

- Improve living and learning environments in the residence halls, classroom spaces, and flexible spaces for affinity groups and commuters, and provide access to nutritious meals that meet students' needs.
- Provide programming and engagement activities that build a community for students:
 1. Engage students through Athletics: A healthy mind in a healthy body through the Athletics Experience, facilities, and sports team sponsorship.
 2. Connect with students through Spirituality and Service.
 3. Create strong leaders through enhanced student leadership programming.
- Increase the quality of College communication.
- Build a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus community by:
 1. Boosting diversity, equity and inclusion in student enrollment.
 2. Developing a faculty and staff recruitment and retention plan.
 3. Creating an action plan under the Institutional Diversity Committee's auspices
 4. Increasing a sense of belonging for diverse students.
- Develop a culture of wellness.



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ENHANCE Sustainability

Elms College will focus on these areas to enhance its sustainability: increasing undergraduate and graduate enrollment, increasing retention for specific target populations, increasing overall fiscal stability, and increasing donor funding. Each area is critical to ensure the College's future growth and legacy.

To enhance sustainability, we will:

- Increase undergraduate enrollment outside of the local geographic area and with fully online/ non-traditional students.
- Increase student retention of Academically Underprepared, Residential and Students from Underrepresented Populations.
- Increase graduate enrollment through increased marketing, improving recruitment events and targeting graduating students and alumni.
- Increase student athlete enrollment through modernizing athletic facilities.
- Augment and track fiscal stability of the College through benchmarks related to enrollment, positive operating margins, increased cash levels, and an increased endowment.
- Boost donor funding for strategic initiatives through a multi-year Comprehensive campaign.



Our new strategic plan will guide us as we meet and embrace opportunities to enable Elms College to carry out the mission and legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph for generations to come. We acknowledge the challenges at hand brought on by COVID-19; however, we aspire to meet the goals as laid out in the plan. We will use the implementation plan to prioritize and inform the budget process, to build bridges to the Elms Plus Experience that meet the needs of today — and tomorrow. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually by the President's Cabinet.

