

Strategic Planning: People Sub-Committee
Concept Paper

PEOPLE

The overarching priority in this section of the strategic plan is to model for our students a mission-driven, financially sustainable, just, and joyful Elms community that excels because of its diversity and in which all members can thrive.

Overview

The qualitative data available –the Strategic Planning surveys and listening sessions feedback, the United for Elms Pulse Survey aggregate results and the Diversity and Inclusion Climate Surveys (student, faculty and staff)—provide an opportunity to approximate the “voices” of diverse constituents and stakeholders in the Elms College community. The overarching priority in this section of the strategic plan is to create a mission-driven, financially sustainable, joyful, community that excels because of its diversity and in which all members of Elms College can thrive. **Our goals, then, reflect strategies to support the recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty and staff with a focus on inclusion and community well-being, while also fortifying just and equitable systems across the College.**

Diversity, equity, inclusion and justice are core principles and commitments of Elms College and offer a lens by which to assess policies and practices, set strategic goals, and build institutional capacity to meet important outcomes for all members of our community as we plan for the future. Inextricably linked to the Mission of the College—to educate a diverse group of students in a supportive and vibrant learning community and to empower students to effect positive change in the community and in the world—the strategies set forth in the PEOPLE pillar draw from our Catholic mission and the charism of our founders, the Sisters of St. Joseph, to unite neighbor with neighbor and neighbor to God without distinction. Throughout our history, Elms College has held a steadfast dedication to removing barriers to educational access and opportunity, firmly rooted in our core values—Faith, Excellence, Community and Justice. The following priorities set forth, then, aim **to 1) support the recruitment and retention of our diverse students and employees, 2) create an inclusive community where all members of the Elms College can thrive, 3) enlist faculty, staff and administrators to help prepare students to be leaders in creating a more just, equitable and pluralistic society, and 4) fortify structures of transparency and accountability to continue to build a just institution for all.**

Elms College remains committed to diversifying faculty and staff in order to increase representation that mirrors that of our students – particularly racial, ethnic, religious, and gender diversity. While we have made headway in the previous strategic plan to meet some demographic benchmarks, this strategic plan takes a more holistic approach to recruitment

that must necessarily coincide with intentional efforts to retain all students and employees by:

- **understanding what structural barriers exist to equitable access, opportunities and outcomes**
- **leveraging internal and external resources to help mitigate structural inequities**
- **cultivating an inclusive, collaborative and respectful learning and working environment so that all feel a sense of belonging and can thrive.**

The demographic changes of our student population creates a unique opportunity for Elms College to become a [Hispanic Serving Institution](#) (HSI), which the Department of Education defines as an institution of higher education that has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students. This evolution would not only provide Elms College access to Federal programs and resources to enhance our educational capacity and infrastructure development, it would also propel forward our efforts to develop, implement, expand and sustain programs and initiatives that remove barriers to educational success, excellence and economic mobility for all of the students we serve. Preparing for this path forward in intentional ways can bolster the underlying ethos of “servingness” by strategically linking it to our educational and Catholic mission, our core values and our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. It further compels us to accentuate the joy, fun and energy, for students and employees alike, that are inherent in building an inclusive community, strengthening culturally responsive curricular and co-curricular development and sustaining experiential engagement with the rich diversity of our surrounding communities. The legacies of service and social justice rooted in the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph and the values we profess set our Catholic institution of higher learning apart and are central to blazing a brighter future for Elms College.

The College should adopt the following strategies to meet these priorities:

Priority 1. Support the recruitment and retention of an increasingly diverse and successful student body.

- Elms College will develop a multi-year bridge program to reflect current best practices in promoting the academic success and overall well-being of all students, particularly our underserved students. Scaffolded over three years, this initiative will serve student cohorts across the life-cycle of their time at Elms College, providing innovative ways to coordinate with and strengthen existing programs such as First Year Seminar, Dorothy Day First Year Encounter, the Honors Program, Elms College Ethical Leadership Program (ECEL), and Experiential Learning. The Bridge Program will also prioritize developing innovative opportunities for Elms College students to connect with and engage our surrounding communities.

To prepare Elms College for the benefits and accountabilities associated with becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution, the College will assess, develop, and expand bilingual and English Language Learning (ELL) student support services across the institution. Areas of focus will be the Center for Student Success (academic coaching/advising/tutoring), academic departments and divisions, particularly those that require licensure and certification exams, and Admissions, Financial Aid and Student Accounts in order to provide expanded family support for incoming students.

- Enhance the growth and vibrancy of international student programs at Elms College.
 - Identify target countries for student recruitment.
 - Identify point people to recruit students.
 - Identify and strengthen supports for international students.

Priority 2. Support the recruitment and retention of a diverse employee population.

- Elms College will experience financial constraints for the foreseeable future. Yet, it is important for the College to be strategic in attracting and retaining a committed and diverse pool of talent to advance our strategic objectives by promoting the benefits of employment at Elms College. The College will implement a salary and benefits study to promote employee recruitment and retention. The VPFA and the Director of Human Resources will conduct a salary study and establish a realistic implementation plan, review and evaluate current health insurance offerings, and review and evaluate child care options.
- Elms College will seek grant support and additional resources to fund innovative strategies for diversifying our faculty and staff. We plan to review and enhance existing staffing and organizational structure to be more effective in the obtention and administration of grants and sponsored funding.

Priority 3. Create an inclusive environment where all members of Elms College can thrive.

- Elms College will expand and coordinate support structures and co-curricular programming initiatives to promote a more holistic integration of both the fun inherent to the college experience and the joy of community-building, with an ethic of care, wellness and social justice for all of our students.

Student Affairs will enhance the richness of its co-curricular programming and recreational activities with additional promotion, marketing and assessment efforts.

- The fun aspects of an Elms College experience will be intentionally cultivated by strengthening old traditions and incorporating new activities into a well promoted Elms

culture. The cross-fertilization of fun, inclusive community building and experiential engagement across our diverse constituencies of students and employees can be enhanced through strengthening the coordination of activities and initiatives that are developed across campus, while centering how our mission, core values and commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice relate to what it uniquely means to be an Elms Blazer.

- We will review and expand CARE Center services to better meet the needs of our students to promote their holistic well-being.
- Elms College will conduct a facilities audit to assess physical accessibility to identify barriers to access. Results of this audit will inform Capital Budget prioritization in subsequent years.
- Elms College will provide opportunities for professional development to faculty and staff. in the following ways:

Elms College aims to increase institutional capacity by developing and funding opportunities for ongoing Professional Development for Faculty and Staff in social-justice programming, including but not limited to Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning, Inclusive Pedagogy and Anti-Racism.

To fortify the integration of Mission, Equity and Social Justice, there will be intentional collaboration among the Center for Equity in Urban Education, the Center for Ethics, Religion and Culture, the D'Amour Center for Faculty Teaching Excellence (DCFTE), the Institutional Diversity Committee and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Elms College will also reactivate and strengthen the Leadership Academy to provide effective mid-level supervision and management at the College enlisting Cabinet members in the development of an annual Managers' professional development curriculum for mid-level managers.

In addition, the College will provide resources for Deans' and Chairs' professional development opportunities. These efforts can further advance transparency and structures of accountability across the institution.

Priority 4. Enlist faculty, staff and administrators to help prepare students to be leaders in a more just, equitable, and pluralistic society through the Elms College Ethical Leadership program.

- Elms College will establish a structure for student ethical leadership in a pluralistic society, while developing curricular and co-curricular activities to be implemented in subsequent years. As part of the Wake Forest Ethical Leadership grant and in preparation

for submitting a multi-year proposal for the Elms College Ethical Leadership (ECEL) program, the VPSA, VPAA and the CDO will convene a cross-campus group (to include the DCFTE, First Year Seminar and the CERC) focused on developing and making recommendations for curricular and co-curricular activities that support a program in ethical, equitable and just leadership in a pluralistic society. This will include input and feedback from key student governance organizations, including the Student Government Association and the Multicultural Scholars Collective. The cross-campus group will also make recommendations for providing appropriate credentials to students who complete curricular and co-curricular activities. The cross-campus group will pilot and refine the program to develop ethical leaders for a more just, equitable, and pluralistic society.

- We will review and expand initiatives around Peer-Peer Education and Peer-Peer Mentorship to enhance student's leadership development. Structuring these programs in a consistent way to reflect best practices includes providing compensation to peer educators and mentors. This will also provide students with a unique professionalization opportunity as they learn to provide peers with educational and community-building resources, which can advance a greater sense of awareness, safety, belonging and inclusion across campus. The goal is to expand current Peer-Peer education programs in Diversity and Wellness to areas such as Sexual Assault Prevention, Disability Justice and Community Engagement, while also developing Peer-Peer Mentorship programs to enhance support for key segments of the student population, such as Commuters, Adult Learners, First-Generation, Graduate, ELL, and International Students.

Priority 5. Fortify structures of transparency and accountability to continue to build a just institution for all.

- Elms College will fortify structures of transparency and accountability across the organization to promote respectful, effective communication, continuing to build a just institution for all. As part of the RESPECT Campaign (launched Spring 2024), the CDO and the Director of Human Resources will work collaboratively with the Staff Council and the Faculty Governance Committee to develop an Elms' community statement related to the mission that "Elms is a respectful environment for all to study and work." We will also provide organizational structure and training to strengthen transparency and accountability by implementing the following: 1) Review Divisional and Unit managers' role in promoting communication and transparency and develop a communication flowchart 2) Disseminate the result of the review through existing college structures: Cabinet meetings, faculty meetings, town halls, Leadership Academy meetings, etc. 3) Incorporate objectives related to communication and transparency in Divisional and Unit managers' annual performance plans.