

TITLE:

Oklahoma Christian University Planning Roadmap

AUTHOR:

Office of the President

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DESCRIPTION:

A plan designed to achieve mission, serve current and future market, and generate financial margin.





PURPOSE

Oklahoma Christian University's (OC) planning roadmap is designed to **achieve mission, best serve our current and future market, and generate financial margin**. It is a **purposeful and empowering framework** for developing core tactics, and a **lens for evaluating** the strategic value, missional appropriateness, and general effectiveness of existing and new efforts and programs.

STRATEGIC PHILOSOPHY

OC's planning roadmap is deeply focused on our direction, not our specific route. It is not an exhaustive "check the box" itinerary for our future. Rather, it empowers our people with the relevant questions, contexts, and assessment tools to determine what strategic and tactical efforts are the best investments for intentionally moving OC forward along the road.

This approach to strategic planning is purposefully flexible in order to better address a complex, fast-changing world. We believe this approach allows us to accomplish our vision and fulfill our mission in a way that is not possible through the plodding, inflexible approach of traditional long-term planning models. We know we can't see the end of the road (we don't think anyone really can) but we do need to define our strategic direction. That is OC's planning roadmap—**not a fixed list of projects but a strategic trajectory** that is...

- enabled by a **strategic framework**;
- guided by core **strategic questions**; and
- inspired by a **strategic vision**.

We don't know what is waiting on the road, but we are fully convinced that our direction is true—that we are positioning ourselves for a journey of God-honoring, student-serving, kingdom-building adventures.

STRATEGIC VISION

What makes OC distinct, what makes our existence eternally valuable, is that we transcend the transactional. We are building "home." We leverage the formative experiences and environments of college life to inspire our students to lifelong service and engagement in God's Kingdom.

We chase this distinction through a common strategic vision, which is informed by an imperative to maximize **our mission**:

Oklahoma Christian University is a higher learning community that transforms lives for Christian faith, scholarship, and service.

Three statements help OC employees and students envision a future road on which the OC mission thrives. These statements provide a cultural framework for considering all actions and a filter by which we evaluate all strategic initiatives:

1. **OC is Home.** Home is the place where you learn, grow, stretch, and connect. Home is where you can take some risks. Home celebrates with you in the good times. Home grieves with you in the bad times. Home prepares you not to stay but to leave—to go into the world to make a living and

to make a life. But, once gone, you long to return...and you do. You return home literally from time to time and figuratively, in your thoughts and memories.

2. **OC Grows.** OC will never be satisfied with stagnation or the status quo. We are change-makers and innovators. OC is a place where students grow and are transformed. OC grows in enrollment and in service to our community and our world.
3. **OC is Mission.** Our family transforms the lives in our community and beyond through mission and service to others. Our University will be a light, inspiring those around us to aspire to be better. This mission guides our thinking; we recognize and champion the fact that faith and learning are inseparable. OC will be, and will be recognized as, the higher education leader in Christian education *because* we will fully own this holistic worldview. Our students will receive a top-tier academic experience—proven by student outcomes and success in post-grad fields—but that experience will be truly transformative because they will have the opportunity to meet God in everything they do.

STRATEGIC PLANNING QUESTIONS

Working from our vision, **three key planning questions guide our decision-making and our actions along the road:**

1. **Does this action serve our mission and vision? (Why does OC exist?)**
2. **Does this action serve an appropriate market? (Whom does OC serve?)**
Our priority market is undergraduate students—predominately young learners who are taking formative early steps in their careers and adult lives—but graduate students are important to us as well. OC’s efforts must serve enough of these students who are willing to invest their time and resources here. Understanding whom we serve and how we serve them is critical for the University. As we serve in the marketplace, OC can expect to grow in numbers and in reputation.
3. **Does this action provide necessary financial margin? (How does OC succeed?)**
OC will operate a business model that achieves a 5% operating margin. Understanding financial margin for all programs and using that knowledge in decision making is vital for the University.

Bottom Line: OC’s dynamic, nimble, and aggressive efforts advance mission, succeed in the market, and create margin.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

We cannot strike out on the road blindly. In order to implement the strategic philosophy, we have developed set of evolving tools that support accomplishment of the vision and allow us to answer the strategic questions. These items are the “enabling strategies” of a living, market-informed, community-conscious roadmap:

1. **Assessment of Student Learning.** Each department and program is involved in an annual assessment of student learning which we are strengthening every year. These assessment reports provide insight into the strategic initiatives that are needed to accomplish the mission of the University.
2. **Program Review and Prioritization (PRP).** PRP is a systematic, regular, data-informed analysis of all academic and non-academic programs on campus. Each department evaluates program effectiveness in regard to key measures, including retention/graduation rates and program margins. PRP is now in its third year. Findings from Program Review and Assessment Reports are carried forward into the planning of programs and revision of priorities on at least an annual basis.
3. **Strategic Enrollment Planning (SEP).** The University completed round one of a Strategic

Enrollment Planning process in 2014. The SEP report included goals and possible strategic initiatives to be considered. It included an academic program demand study conducted by consultants from Noel-Levitz. This is part of the framework that will continue to inform our strategic direction. The SEP process will continue in a revised format, utilizing the normal organizational channels rather than special committees.

4. **Idea to Implementation Process.** All future program proposals will be vetted through this new process, which ensures proper review and complete consideration of how new ideas impact OC's strategic vision and answer the strategic questions guiding us along the road.
5. **Margin-Based Budgeting.** Margin-Based Budgeting is scheduled to be implemented for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. This approach to budgeting will support the decision-making process and encourage broad responsibility for enrollment and financial results of the University, in addition to providing the resources needed to support enrollment goals.
6. **Thrive! The Complete Campaign.** In order to respond annually to the priorities established by departments of the University, we developed a flexible funding mechanism. Thrive, OC's 3 year and \$30 million campaign, is strategic and tactical, nimble and transparent (for transparency on the Thrive campaign, go to oc.edu/thrive). This funding mechanism is perfectly suited for a university that seeks to be effective for the near and far term. Rather than a lengthy, multi-year effort that creates goals and emphasis areas years before implementation, OC sets annual targets. Thrive is currently in Year 2 with Year 3 projects currently under consideration.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

OC's strategic philosophy is purposefully flexible, but we must—and we do—select **specific strategic goals and strategic projects to implement**. These decisions guide our movement in the near-term, toward our next defined checkpoint along the road.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Our SEP process established four key enrollment goals. Meanwhile, our Board of Trustees has challenged us to one additional strategic goal.

1. **SEP Goal 1: Grow new enrollments to 2,200 undergraduates and 800 graduate students by leveraging new and existing programs.**
2. **SEP Goal 2: Improve retention and graduation rates to achieve and maintain 80% first-to-second-year retention, 70% second-to-third-year retention, and a 60% six-year graduation rate.**
3. **SEP Goal 3: Increase net student revenue, both per student and in total.**
4. **SEP Goal 4: Attract a maximum number of church of Christ students.** OC should not neglect its heritage, but continue to serve these students.
5. **Board of Trustees Goal: OC will be, and will be recognized as, the higher education leader in faith-filled learning.** At OC, faith and learning will be inseparable and OC will be recognized as a national leader in Christian higher education.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Accomplishing the strategic goals of the University requires the efforts of every member of the University community. Each person can have an impact on each goal every day. To empower our people with the tools and framework they need to make thoughtful, coordinated, mission-maximizing moves in this regard, we regularly invest in overarching strategic initiatives, such as:

1. **New Program Development.** To achieve enrollment growth through new programs (SEP Goal 1), OC's 5 colleges have launched a 5x5 Initiative. Each college has identified five programs to begin or enhance over the next five years under a rigorous, thoughtful, and streamlined decision process. Several of our colleges have received significant Thrive funding for these efforts. Thrive has provided startup funding to begin new or enhance existing programs in the colleges of Engineering (the August 2015 launch of the MS in Computer Sciences), Natural and Health Sciences (nursing department facilities), and Business Administration (new programs in process). New programs will also contribute to SEP Goal 3 of growing student revenue.
2. **Student Success.** Student success has been emphasized as part of our HLC quality initiative and through additional internal retention marketing and other efforts. As proof of our success so far, in fall 2015, freshman to sophomore retention increased by 5% to an all-time record of 81.6%. We look forward to additional strategic initiatives to impact student retention and graduation rates (SEP Goal 2).
3. **Enrollment Revenue Management System.** To help accomplish SEP Goal 3, OC embarked on a new Enrollment Revenue Management Strategy (ERMS) leading into the 2015-16 academic year. This strategy empowers OC to more effectively, efficiently, and consistently provide scholarship incentives to prospective students.
4. **ETHOS.** Becoming a leader in faith-filled learning is what's commonly called a "big, hairy, audacious goal" (BHAG). This goal is being thoughtfully chased, in part, through the establishment of ETHOS, OC's uniquely personal and flexible spiritual life transformation experience, which has been funded by \$600,000 in Thrive support.

STRATEGIC THRIVE FUNDING

Another way to look at the strategic direction of the University is to see what we have recently funded or are trying to fund. While many initiatives may require little or no funding or be funded out of the operating budget, the Thrive menu provides a signpost about where we are headed on this road.

Funded Thrive projects:

- College of Engineering and Computer Science Launch Fund
- College of Natural and Health Sciences Launch Fund
- Strategic Planning Fund
- Davisson American Heritage – Cail Auditorium Remodel
- Das Millicanhaus Vienna Facility Remodel
- Fitness Center Overhaul ("The Dub")
- Auditorium High-Definition Digital Projection

Thrive projects currently on the funding menu:

- ETHOS: Spiritual Life Transformation
- College of Business Administration Launch Fund
- Nursing Facility Fund
- Campus Café Reboot and Coffee Shop
- Oklahoma City Marketing & Recruiting Initiative

CONCLUSION: THE ROAD STRETCHES FAR

The ink on our map will never dry. OC's Planning Roadmap will be regularly reviewed and updated as our journey continues and as we hit our checkpoints. We've come a long way today and we will aggressively continue, enjoying every expected and unexpected landmark on the road—because, at our core, it's not just the destination that we're chasing, it's the trip.