

# **Bethel University - Strategic Direction 2021**

## **Introduction**

Bethel's rich history and growing significance as a comprehensive Christian university positions it well for the future. We are united in our mission and commitment to seven core values, all of which *equip people to serve and lead in the name of Christ*. Each of the schools has different delivery models, student populations, and programs, but the differences between the schools pale in comparison to the commonalities that unite them at their core. As we chart the course for 2021, Bethel's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are engaged in extraordinarily demanding tasks—one set looking outward, one set looking inward.

As we look outward at the world we must reach in Jesus' name, we are prioritizing programs and building on our foundational goals to strengthen distinctiveness, effectively expand reach and reputation, and engage with the people and movements of God locally and globally.

As we look inward at the university and our community, we seek to practice sound financial management, care for employees, and develop facilities that are essential for sound education and a healthy learning environment.

We have created an iterative and disciplined planning culture that includes a thorough campus master planning process. With God's help, we commit to the initiatives in this plan.

## **Our Essence**

Bethel University equips people to lead and serve in the name of Christ.

## **Strategic Intent**

To honor God by being the Christ-centered school of choice for students seeking a transformational education.

- Bethel Seminary—Develops biblical and theological grounding, personal and spiritual character, and leadership skills transforming passionate followers of Christ into purposeful leaders.
- College of Arts & Sciences—Integrates faith and scholarship preparing undergraduates to lead and serve with excellence in every aspect of life.
- College of Adult & Professional Studies—Enables working adults to earn a college degree that is in line with their passions, professional goals, and personal beliefs.
- Graduate School—Equips students to work and lead with confidence and competence, building relevant job skills and a foundation in ethical leadership.

## Mission

Boldly informed and motivated by the Christian faith, Bethel educates and energizes men and women for excellence in leadership, scholarship, and service. We prepare graduates to serve in strategic capacities to renew minds, live out biblical truth, transform culture, and advance the gospel.

## Vision

At Bethel University we are committed to excellence. But here, excellence means something more. It means taking our faith in Christ and integrating it into everything we learn, into everything we do, so that we can accomplish incredible things—in our careers, in our churches, in our communities, and in our world.

## Foundational Goals

**Goal 1** - Strengthen distinctiveness: As a leader in Christ-centered, transformational education, we will articulate and manifest the mission in distinctive and innovative ways.

**Goal 2** – Extend reach and reputation: We will increase the availability and reputation of educational programs, optimizing enrollment and developing necessary relationships and partnerships.

**Goal 3** – Commit to global engagement and diversity: We will emphasize global engagement and increase community diversity in order to prepare students and others for the changing world in which we live and serve.

**Goal 4** - Strengthen human, financial, and facility resources: We will strengthen our current and future resources and establish a culture of planning.

## Strategic Priorities

Bethel University has identified seven strategic priorities for the coming decade. We believe that investing differentially in support of these priorities will set us apart from the 200+ seminaries and 4000+ universities in the United States. None of these priorities is an end in itself; each is a means toward greater strategic effectiveness. None is about facilities created for their own sake. Each builds on areas of existing strength or areas where meaningful improvement will increase the ability to achieve our strategic intent.

The Campus Master Plan has been a symbolic illustration of strategic prioritization, even as it has helped us to think about the real physical future of the campus. The strategic prioritization of

programs and opportunities drove the campus master planning process, so that the facility improvements and additions called for are the direct results of a commitment to educate more effectively. All the statements of priority arise from our essence and mission: we desire to be educationally excellent and *to equip people to lead and serve in the name of Christ*.

### **What are these priorities? Why have they risen to the forefront?**

**Priority 1** – Position and resource **Bethel Seminary** for successful service to the work of the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond.

- Bethel Seminary has a deep, historic commitment to serve the church and has potential for continued Kingdom impact.
- God has chosen to do his primary work in the world through the church.
- The Seminary Trustee Task Force has identified what it will take to position and resource Bethel Seminary to educate students for ministry who *are equipped to lead and serve in the name of Christ*.

**Priority 2** – Upgrade facilities and support for the **natural and health sciences** to match the excellence of faculty and programs.

- Development of the Larson Family Nursing Education Center and the launch of the M.S. in Physician Assistant signal important advances in the health sciences.
- The natural sciences are among our strongest programs and achieve remarkable results with facilities that hinder rather than support academic excellence.
- The decision to pursue National Science Foundation grants is just beginning to bear results in terms of research support and reputation; expanded facilities will make possible more faculty-student partnerships in science research.
- In these key arenas of our culture – researchers, educators, practitioners, and compassionate caregivers – *equipping students to lead and serve in the name of Christ* is vital to our calling and strength as a university.

**Priority 3** – Significantly raise the profile of our **business and economics** programs.

- As one of the first evangelical universities with a business program, a foundation of growth has been built over three decades. During that time there have been significant increases in enrollment and faculty expertise.
- At the undergraduate and graduate levels, programs have reached a tipping point where investment can lead to increased enrollment capacity and program quality.
- These programs have the most long-term potential to graduate students who have the financial capacity to support Bethel's future development. At present, they are also among the most economical programs to run.
- The business world is desperately seeking leaders who are ethically grounded, know how to lead, and act with integrity.

- Bethel is already *equipping students to lead and serve in the name of Christ* and it is important to the future success of the university to build these programs to the next level of visibility and influence.

**Priority 4** – Achieve excellence both on and off the field for every sport in which we compete in intercollegiate **athletics**.

- In the lives of our students: participation in athletics has a high correlation with positive character formation, leadership development, and liberal arts skill development.
- In our ability to attract students: programs in athletics have the potential to expand our recruiting radius.
- In our visibility and credibility: success in athletics increases university visibility and is tied to the public perception of institutional quality.
- What we must do: our current facilities inhibit recruiting, and lead to lower student morale and performance as we balance practice time with academic commitments, and general student recreational opportunities.
- Increasing our commitment to excellence in athletics increases our commitment to *equip people to lead and serve in the name of Christ*.

**Priority 5** – Expand our graduates’ view of the world through increased **diversity** and opportunities for **global and experiential learning**.

- The world in which our graduates will lead and serve is interconnected and diverse racially, culturally, and theologically.
- Evidence shows that when students encounter people whose life experiences are radically different from their own, formative and powerful learning opportunities occur.
- As people committed to being part of what God is doing globally and locally, our students must experience the global church and the global marketplace.
- Learning to engage and value people of other races and cultures is a life skill and a biblical mandate foundational to our commitment to *equip people to lead and serve in the name of Christ*.

**Priority 6** – Increase the **fundraising capacity** significantly and rapidly to provide the resources needed to accomplish the strategic priorities.

- As an institution we have demonstrated commitment to these priorities. We have tightened our belts, made tough choices, increased our accountability, and become more transparent in financial management.
- In our planning processes we have focused on essentials and necessities. The facilities and program items identified through strategic planning and the campus master planning process are not luxuries; they are necessities if we are to be an educationally excellent, globally engaged university that equips its graduates to make exceptional contributions in their life-long service to God and the world.
- We will invest in the development team to achieve new levels of fundraising success and align the development organization with the rest of the university and with the priorities of this plan.

- We will grow the assets of the Bethel University Foundation significantly and increase its visibility and reputation as a trustworthy and effective organization in which to invest. We are developing the right team for moving forward with this priority. With a strong and effective board, a committed leadership team, gifted faculty and staff, and a host of prayer warriors, Bethel University is poised to step up in its ability to *equip people to lead and serve in the name of Christ*.

**Priority 7** – Clearly articulate the **distinctiveness** of a Bethel University education in a way that keeps us anchored to our mission and distinguishes us within a crowded higher education marketplace.

- We will revisit and revise the Bethel brand through the Branding Initiative.
- We will challenge each educational unit to articulate its identity from the perspective of the *student experience*. This is an opportunity to interpret and reimagine Edgren’s original vision for *enrolling* the right students and *befriending them* while they are here, all with an eye toward *who* they are becoming and *where* they will go.
- We will be known in all of our schools for our commitment to *equip people to lead and serve in the name of Christ*.