

Gustavus Adolphus College

2024-25 Academic Affairs Goals

The Provost's Office leadership team has organized and prioritized our collective work to align with the four strategic imperatives of the College: deliver a transformational student experience, drive enrollment growth, achieve financial sustainability and support and enhance people and culture. We invite our divisional offices, departments, and programs to identify goals that align with the institutional priorities and these divisional goals as they consider their work for this 2024-25 academic year.

Notably, the goals do not include all of the regular, required and essential work of the offices. We will continue to do the work necessary to provide an excellent educational experience for our students and fulfill our mission—that is not a goal, but an expectation. Rather than name what we regularly do, these goals respond to data and feedback indicating areas for improvement and indicate our plans for 2024-25 to improve the Gustavus experience for students, faculty, and staff. As our offices, departments, and programs develop their own goals, we encourage identification of those areas of focus that data and feedback indicate need improvement as we collectively work toward delivery of a transformational student experience, drive enrollment growth, achieve financial sustainability, and support and enhance people and culture.

I. Deliver a Transformational Student Experience

A. Communication

1. Context: Over the past few years, students have reported poor and non-transparent communication, particularly regarding the processes and rationale for policy changes. Students also report frustration with how variable and differently offices communicate. While we communicated more effectively with students in 2023-24 relative to prior years (based upon student feedback), there remains room for improvement.
2. Divisional Goal: Provide clear, timely, and regular communication with students, faculty, and staff about policies and processes, particularly those that are in response to student or employee input.
3. Goals/Tactics:
 - a. Create, update and/or enhance webpages to more effectively and consistently communicate policies, processes, and support to students.
 - b. Establish a regular cycle of communication to students about academic policies, deadlines, and other student-related matters.
 - c. Facilitate purposeful, cross-divisional engagement among employees around strategies to improve and clarify policy, process, and communication.
 - d. Collaboratively work to launch the physical and digital First Stop and assess student/campus communication-related needs.
 - e. Conduct periodic parent/guardian communications at key times during the semester.
 - f. Support FTS Director in piloting new communication strategies to welcome first year students to campus.
 - g. Create a more effective communication plan for key Student Life-related processes (including Title IX).
4. Desired Outcomes: Student survey results indicate satisfaction with communication from administration and offices, that students know when to expect communication from administrative

offices and understand why policies or processes change or do not; students, faculty, and staff express an easier time finding information and support; First Stop assessments indicate improved navigational support due to improved communication.

B. Closing Student Satisfaction and Outcome Gaps

1. Context: Multiple data sources, including surveys and retention data, show that satisfaction and outcomes vary based on student characteristics (e.g., demographic, identity, etc.). Students from underrepresented and/or marginalized groups have lower satisfaction and diminished outcomes relative to other students.
2. Divisional Goal: Meet the needs of today's student population, with a focus on students currently less well-served by the College by adapting policy, practices, curricular and co-curricular offerings, and services.
3. AA Goals/Tactics:
 - a. Lead and/or engage in cross-divisional conversations and projects toward improving the student experience.
 - b. Assess the First Stop (digital and physical) and make adjustments toward improved effectiveness and serving student needs.
 - c. Share disaggregated data related to student success and outcomes and encourage departments, offices, and programs to make evidence-informed, operation-level decisions for improvement.
 - d. Work with departments and faculty committees to plan and schedule courses or programmatic activities that support student academic success.
 - e. Oversee and monitor implementation of the comprehensive changes to the academic program, including collection of student, faculty, and staff feedback, and make appropriate adjustments toward meeting student needs.
 - f. Ensure SigX policy, procedure and funding supports student access to a breadth of experiential opportunities.
 - g. Identify Academic Bulletin policies and processes needing revision toward inclusion and access.
4. Desired Outcomes: Department, program, and offices have strategies for improvement that are immediately implemented in 2024-25 or 2025-26 (short-term); smaller satisfaction and outcome gaps in students from marginalized and/or underrepresented groups over next three years (medium-term); and readiness to implement phase II of the First Stop/student support hub.

C. Making Gustavus Systems More Navigable for All Students

1. Context: Student, faculty, and staff feedback indicates that some of the systems and processes students must navigate in order to take care of basic tasks and transactions (e.g., housing, financial aid, registration) are onerous and confusing. Navigating these systems takes time and energy that students could be putting into transformational curricular and co-curricular activities.
2. Divisional Goal: Create a culture of providing a "student-ready" campus by redesigning systems and processes for ease of student navigation.
3. AA Goals/Tactics:
 - a. Collaborate cross-divisionally to implement and assess First Stop physical and digital infrastructure.
 - b. Collaborate with the Registrar's Office to implement and assess the online course catalog and plan improvements for 2025-26.
 - c. Assess the co-location of CICE, Career Development, and Health Professions.

- d. Collaborate with faculty and student support offices to respond effectively to student needs on Advising Days.
 - e. Assess the new schedule grid and work with departments and programs on schedules that reduce student conflicts.
 - f. Partner with Primacy/Web/GTS/Marketing on a new website and work with departments and offices to encourage standardization for easier navigation.
 - g. Identify Academic Bulletin policies and processes needing revision for greater transparency and ease of student navigation.
 - h. Begin implementation of the Signature Experience, developing clear and simple processes for enrollment in the Signature Experience, and providing excellent advising and support for students' engagement in the experience.
4. Desired Outcomes: Implemented First Stop in 2024-25; measuring high satisfaction on processes and supports on Advising Days; implemented Courser catalog and training; assessment of pilot programming related to Signature Experience; Successful launch of SigX in May 2025; Development of Student Life subdivisions.

D. Advance Capital Initiatives

1. Context: Numerous buildings on campus need improvement. Prospective and current students have expressed concern about Residence Halls, music performance and practice spaces, and athletics facilities. In addition, students and employees have expressed concern about how to identify and navigate to student support services that are distributed in office spaces across campus.
2. Divisional Goal: Contribute to large capital improvement prioritization and consideration of space utilization across campus, including the upcoming study of the Jackson Campus Center and the Johnson Student Union.
3. Goals/Tactics:
 - a. Participate on the President's Capital Planning Team and college-wide Capital Request Committee and offer input on prioritization of capital projects
 - b. Serve on the Space Proposals Working Group and offer input on space utilization requests
 - c. Provide input into the campus center space study process to help inform recommendations of the external consultant
4. Desired Outcomes: Capital Planning Team submits a capital planning priorities proposal for consideration by the Board of Trustees; finalize a phased plan for reimagining Campus Center and Student Union; respond to space utilization requests toward meeting campus strategic needs.

II. Drive Enrollment Growth and Retention

A. Offer a Distinctive Educational Experience

1. Context: Market feedback as well as feedback from prospective students and parents indicates that Gustavus has lacked a distinctive identity. While we offer an excellent holistic, educational experience, prospective students and parents have not always seen how it differs from similar institutions. Last year, we made many changes to the academic program to help address this issue, but now we need to implement the changes and identify/ highlight the strength and distinction of our curricular and co-curricular programs.

2. Divisional Goal: Offer an educational experience distinguishable from others in the marketplace through creative and distinctive curricular and co-curricular offerings, including the Signature Experience program and a student-ready campus environment.
3. Goals/Tactics:
 - a. Offer new/enhanced/expanded curricular and co-curricular programs that will drive enrollment of students who would not have otherwise matriculated.
 - b. Ensure student-centered decision making by establishing processes for regularly soliciting student feedback about matters that impact students.
 - c. Support the Curriculum Committee and the SigX Curriculum Working Group to finalize and launch the Signature Experience program, including clear criteria for each pathway, the implementation of digital credentials, and a curriculum that enables students to articulate the value of their liberal arts education to their post-graduation endeavors.
 - d. Assess changes to the academic program and request faculty feedback around distinctive components/changes including: 1) the LAP general education outcomes focused on disciplinary reading and the QUANT, USIDG, and GLAFC outcomes focused on information literacy and 2) the efficacy of the new and distinctive scheduling grid components (i.e., performing arts block, daily chapel).
 - e. Attract new students and improve current student belonging and engagement by providing and promoting a wide range of clubs, organizations, and intramural sports.
 - f. Assess programs that support student belonging and growth (e.g., orientation programs, student clubs, PAs, Peer MALTS etc.) to ensure that they are adapting to the needs of a changing student body.
 - g. Ensure that communication to students about campus updates, policies, and events occurs through accessible platforms, with appropriate timeliness and regularity.
4. Desired Outcomes: Admission reports that prospective students and families see the distinctiveness of Gustavus, marketing perception studies indicate a distinctive Gustavus identity, student surveys suggest that we are meeting their academic and personal needs, current students are positive about their experience and act as influencers among peers.

B. Communicate our Distinctive Educational Experience

1. Context: Market feedback as well as feedback from prospective students and parents indicates that Gustavus lacks a shared language to describe the education we provide, particularly around what makes Gustavus distinctive.
2. Divisional Goal: Partner with Admission and Marketing and Communication to disseminate shared language and stories that highlight Gustavus's distinctive identity.
3. Goals/Tactics:
 - a. Work closely with the new Chief Marketing Officer and Admission to create and implement a marketing plan for academic departments/programs, the academic program, and co-curricular programs that resonate with prospective students and influencers
 - b. Begin implementation of the Signature Experience, with a specific focus on communicating its value to current and prospective students
 - c. Collaborate closely with admission to develop and implement recruitment strategies and communication for international students and culturally diverse domestic students
 - d. Provide ongoing training and resources for Faculty Admission Liaisons to promote Gustavus's distinctive educational offerings, including generation of compelling narratives that highlight distinctions in academic programs and student academic achievements
 - e. Support and provide input to marketing toward enhanced internal communication, key messaging points, identification of Gustavus's distinctive identity

- f. Encourage departments to share compelling stories of student achievements, faculty research impact, and innovative program initiatives.
 - g. Collaborate with Marketing/Web to enhance the college website to serve as a dynamic platform for showcasing Gustavus's distinctive educational experience, including features that highlight student life, academic programs, and campus culture.
 - h. Create visual representations of student engagement data, such as participation rates in clubs and organizations, community service hours, and career development outcomes.
 - i. Use infographics and interactive dashboards to illustrate Gustavus's commitment to holistic student development.
4. Desired Outcomes: Admission reports that prospective students and families hear shared language and recognize the distinctiveness of Gustavus, marketing perception studies indicate a distinctive Gustavus identity, student applicant data indicates enhanced interest in promoted programs.

III. Attain Financial Sustainability

1. Context: The College currently has a budget structural deficit, thus college expenses are out-pacing college revenue. In order to be financially sustainable for the long term, we need to realign resources, create efficiencies, and make decisions toward improved budget stewardship.
2. Divisional Goal: Make data-informed decisions that center the student experience as we re-align budgets with current enrollment. Create a longer-term financial model that allows us to meet compensation goals for faculty and staff, while offering academic and co-curricular opportunities toward delivering a transformational student experience.
3. Goals/Tactics:
 - a. Continue to support the implementation of the comprehensive changes to the academic program, specifically making progress on the \$3M total savings needed.
 - b. Make evidence-informed decisions during the budget request cycle for FY26.
 - c. Conduct a more thorough assessment of budget/time-intensive areas or possible new revenue, including events, software analysis, summer term, pre- and post-school food and housing.
 - d. Provide budget guidance to departments/programs with an eye toward advancing strategic goals of the college, sustainable academic excellence, and enhanced student experience.
 - e. Enhance knowledge of department-specific endowment funds to maximize use for students and programs.
 - f. Review departmental budgets to prioritize meaningful student experiences as connected to college-wide strategic imperatives.
4. Desired Outcomes: The academic program has reduced its expenses for FY26 toward achievement of a three-year goal of \$3M; departments have a smaller amount of unspent funds (operating and endowed) by the end of FY25; departments develop a budget and programming plan for FY26 that includes fulfillment of operational needs and endowment yield expectation.

IV. Support and Enhance People and Culture

A. Provide Clear Expectations and Accountability

1. Context: Feedback from some faculty and staff indicates frustration with unclear or nonexistent expectations, a lack of accountability for job performance, and/or a lack of recognition for people who attain excellence.
2. Divisional Goal: Provide clarity around expectations for individuals, offices, and departments and hold individuals accountable to those expectations, by recognizing excellence, addressing low performance, and providing clear pathways for professional development. Thoughtfully engage in college and Board discussions around compensation (faculty and staff).
3. Goals/Tactics:
 - a. Monitor performance related to job expectations; if essential functions are not being performed adequately, initiate performance evaluation and improvement plans.
 - b. Support the Faculty Compensation Commission's work as it considers how and if compensation models should align with performance.
 - c. Provide models for updated department chair/program director compensation (for Faculty Senate consideration) that is sustainable, where compensation reflects the amount of expected work and provides for accountability.
 - d. Support faculty in refining faculty review processes so that processes are clear, support excellence and are administratively sustainable.
 - e. Revive the process for administrative office reviews that provide both feedback on current performance and an opportunity for innovation and strategic planning.
 - f. Create a regular program of academic events and other college events that includes clear expectations about faculty and staff participation and prioritizes high-impact, sustainable events over resource-intensive, lower impact events.
 - g. Develop options for distributing and celebrating faculty awards in a manner that better recognizes faculty excellence.
 - h. Collaborate with the Faculty Senate on faculty workload, including clarifying job expectations, on-campus presence, service responsibilities, and other factors that have been highlighted as unclear or lacking mechanisms for accountability and/or recognition of work (a multi-year initiative).
 - i. Provide opportunities for faculty and staff to learn how to work with data and AI as part of ongoing professional development toward performance excellence.
 - j. Provide faculty committee leaders with resources and guidance on their responsibilities as a committee chair so that they can effectively serve the faculty.
 - k. Improve, streamline, and make more useful the Academic Department and Program Review process
4. Desired Outcomes: Approved handbook language regarding faculty expectations and reviews; Approved department chair's guide language regarding chair compensation and expectations; Calendar of academic events that highlight academic excellence and the academic program; Faculty Senate discussions about faculty workload; progress on articulation of AI use in administrative and academic arenas.

B. Improve Communication

1. Context: Feedback from faculty and staff indicate that while there have been improvements in communication (FTF and faculty communication was particularly effective last year),

communication from administrative offices and between offices continues to need improvement, especially as we work to implement SigX.

2. Divisional Goal: Build trust, transparency, and a sense of shared mission by regular communication, valuing expertise, supporting innovation and experimentation, and engaging stakeholders.
3. Goals/Tactics:
 - a. Work with offices and directors to establish, as appropriate, regular interactions within their own offices, departments, divisions (e.g., meetings, check-ins).
 - b. Set division-wide communication goals and work to implement such communication minimally at outset, mid-points, and completion of projects.
 - c. Value input from stakeholders on cross-divisional initiatives and keep open lines of communication to those who are directly involved in or whose work will be impacted by changes to process, projects, etc.
 - d. Work with college leadership on regular communications with the community on initiatives that are important and impact the full community.
4. Desired Outcomes: Employees express a greater awareness and knowledge of campus events, projects, etc.; employees report enhanced and more effective communication across the AA division and college-wide.