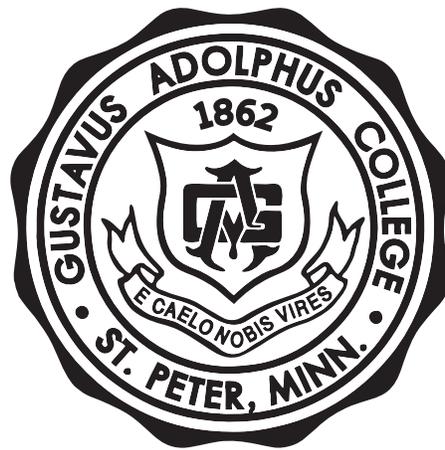


# GUSTAVUS

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GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

## Strategic Plan



*25 April 2008*





## MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Gustavus Adolphus College Board of Trustees

From: James Peterson, President  
Mary E. Morton, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: 5 May 2008

Subject: Gustavus Adolphus College Strategic Plan

On 25 April 2008, the Gustavus Adolphus College Board of Trustees unanimously approved a Strategic Plan for the College, and we are pleased to share this document with you. This plan incorporates the work of faculty, students, staff, trustees, alumni, and other friends of the College. It is a "touchstone document" that lays out clearly our higher-level values and goals. It affirms our identity as an undergraduate, liberal arts, residential, Swedish Lutheran, college. The plan also declares our commitments to academic excellence, transformational education, cultural competence, maturation of faith and understanding of religion, and responsible stewardship.

In adopting this plan, the Board of Trustees affirms the Gustavus community's commitment to these goals and to the process by which we will discern the means to achieve them. Over the next year, and into the next decade, we will use this vision to focus our work of continued planning (strategic, campaign, marketing, budget).

Our next task will be to call upon the full range of experiences and perspectives in our community to develop the tactics by which we will meet our goals. We will need to specify the resources that will be necessary to support these tactics and the rubrics we will use to assess our success.

There is still challenging work to be done and we are cheered by and grateful for the support of all who continue to serve our students, colleagues, and the College.

# MISSION AND CORE VALUES

## MISSION STATEMENT

Gustavus Adolphus College is a church-related, residential liberal arts college firmly rooted in its Swedish and Lutheran heritage.

The College offers students of high aspiration and promise a liberal arts education of recognized excellence provided by faculty who embody the highest standards of teaching and scholarship. The Gustavus curriculum is designed to bring students to mastery of a particular area of study within a general framework that is both interdisciplinary and international in perspective.

The College strives to balance educational tradition with innovation and to foster the development of values as an integral part of intellectual growth. It seeks to promote the open exchange of ideas and the independent pursuit of learning.

The College aspires to be a community of persons from diverse backgrounds who respect and affirm the dignity of all people. It is a community where a mature understanding of the Christian faith and lives of service are nurtured and students are encouraged to work toward a just and peaceful world.

The purpose of a Gustavus education is to help its students attain their full potential as persons, to develop in them a capacity and passion for lifelong learning, and to prepare them for fulfilling lives of leadership and service in society.

## CORE VALUES OF GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

Implicit in this statement of institutional purpose and goals are certain institutional values that guide the Gustavus community. These values are rooted in our distinctive heritage and help to define our community. They also help us to focus on appropriate objectives for our college, guide the selection of priorities among those objectives, and help to shape the strategies we will pursue in the face of various challenges and opportunities.

## STATEMENT OF CORE VALUES (CONTINUED)

### *EXCELLENCE*

First among our shared values is a commitment to high quality, even to excellence, in all that we do. In the words of Eric Norelius, founder of the College, "Whatever we do, let us do it well." Given our other values, it should be clear that this commitment to excellence is neither a code word for elitism nor a rejection of the best in Gustavus' heritage. Indeed, our distinctive heritage demands nothing less than excellence.

### *COMMUNITY*

Gustavus has always prized community and has been marked by a pervasive sense of concern for every member of the College community. Civility, mutual respect, cooperation, shared governance, and caring have long been hallmarks of the College. Freedom to express a broad range of ideas is central to our sense of community, and resolution of conflicts in the broader society has long been a fundamental concern for us.

### *JUSTICE*

The Swedish and biblical heritage of Gustavus, its specifically Lutheran roots and bonds, have ensured that justice and fairness are primary institutional values. The College strives to be a just community in all of its actions and to educate its students for morally responsible lives. Relations within the College community are guided by high moral principles, and persons graduating from Gustavus are expected to understand the full moral implications of their actions. "Education for the common good" would well describe what we strive for, and integrity must be one of our defining characteristics.

### *SERVICE*

The College highly values service as an objective of life and of education. We embrace the biblical notion that true leadership expresses itself in service to others, and affirm the classical ideal of a liberating education, an education that frees one to serve God and humanity to the best of one's ability.

### *FAITH*

The conviction that religious faith enriches and completes learning, is the bedrock of community, ethics, and service, and compels one to excellence in a divinely ordered world informs our whole enterprise. Without expecting conformity to a specific religious tradition, we encourage an honest exploration of religious faith and seek to foster a mature understanding of Christian perspectives on life.

While there are undoubtedly additional values that distinguish Gustavus from other institutions and that guide and define us, these five values are certainly pervasive within and foundational for the College community.

# GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS STRATEGIC PLAN

## VISION STATEMENT

Guided by our distinctive core values, we will embrace our mission as a community informed by our traditions and committed to undergraduate, residential, liberal arts, Swedish-Lutheran higher education. Our faculty, embodying the highest standards of teaching, scholarship, and service and our staff, guided by the highest standards of their professions, will collaborate to support the highest quality education for all of our students.

Gustavus Adolphus College will educate students to contribute their intellectual and creative gifts to society, to lead within their communities, and to bring rich perspectives to their engagement with the world. We will hold up the character and accomplishments of our graduates as the primary evidence of our success.

In our work and relationships, we will draw on the assets of our region as a context for providing a nationally recognized liberal arts education. Even as we educate students to become compassionate, effective leaders, the College will model compassionate, ethical, and effective action within its local communities.

# STRATEGIC GOALS

## GOAL 1: EDUCATE FOR LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE.

Our Mission Statement calls us to engage students in transformative education that leads them to attain their full potential as persons, to develop in them a capacity and passion for lifelong learning, and to prepare them for fulfilling lives of leadership and service in society. Gustavus will invest in transformative education practices—in classrooms, studios, laboratories, performance spaces, residence halls, support offices, and playing fields—to support individual student success across the campus.

- 1.1 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Enhance Gustavus academic strength in student-centered learning in the liberal arts disciplines and pre-professional education by investing in academic departments and programs.
- 1.2 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Enhance Gustavus' strength in student-centered learning through a strong partnership between the Divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.
- 1.3 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Develop more fully and staff appropriately a program of undergraduate research and creativity across the curriculum.
- 1.4 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Develop and implement a robust model of lifelong learning that is firmly rooted in our liberal arts tradition and consonant with our academic and co-curricular programs.
- 1.5 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Ensure access to the critical support services needed to ensure students have the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Create and appropriately staff an Office of Fellowships and Scholarships to cultivate student leadership and access to nationally competitive post-graduate fellowship opportunities.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Ascertain and provide appropriate academic support that meets the needs of the anticipated changing student demographic.

- 1.6 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Develop a distinctive Integrated Leadership program that combines rigorous academic study with relevant field experience for the development of students' leadership skills and competencies.
- 1.7 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Build and renovate academic facilities in a manner informed by the curriculum, student needs, and environmental stewardship.

## GOAL 2: ENGAGE EDUCATION AT THE INTERSECTIONS.

Intellectual transformation occurs when students make deep connections between disciplines, experiences, and/or cultures. When students encounter opposing perspectives, make sense of incongruent information, or wrestle with ambiguity, they are challenged as individuals and groups to employ the skills of critical thinking and to affirm the processes of civil engagement. A Gustavus education will prepare students to thrive at the intersections of cultures, disciplines, questions, and commitments.

- 2.1 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Develop Interdisciplinary Centers of Synergy (e.g., Kendall Center for Engaged Learning, Johnson Center for Environmental Innovation, Center for International and Cultural Study, Center for Leadership Development, Center for Vocation and Reflection) which strategically integrate key components of our mission and vision and enrich existing disciplines and programs.
- 2.2 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Enhance student engagement through the development of residential learning communities to integrate student learning beyond the classroom.
- 2.3 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Fully develop and appropriately staff interdisciplinary curricular programs.
- 2.4 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Develop and sustain a community committed to and practiced in intellectual diversity and civil discourse.
- 2.5 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Enhance the dialogue between faith and reason within the Gustavus community.
- 2.6 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Engage with local and regional partners for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge, the strengthening of our community, and students' civic and academic learning.
- 2.7 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Develop a more integrated approach to learning about and practicing health and wellness.

## GOAL 3: ENGAGE WITH THE WORLD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Gustavus commitment to the liberal arts, its vocation as a Swedish Lutheran college, and its dedication to student success require all members of the community to respect difference, develop a global perspective, and act justly as informed world citizens. Gustavus will strategically and intentionally move forward to develop the tactics by which these commitments will be realized in order to provide the transformative education and experiences Gustavus graduates will need to be successful and make a difference in the world.

**3.1** *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Deepen the engagement of students with ethnic, geographic, socio-economic, and religious diversity so as to prepare them for leadership and service in the world.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Develop a clear plan and effectively respond to an expectation of Cultural Competency for students.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Increase our curricular commitment to enhanced opportunities for students to gain a global perspective.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Establish a clear philosophy, goals and financial models for student participation in education abroad.

**3.2** *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* In keeping with our founding tradition, provide immigrant populations in our region with greater access to a Gustavus education.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Establish a financial aid model that ensures access to a diverse student body.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Establish initiatives that increase the diversity of the faculty, staff, and administration.

**3.3** *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Increase our engagement with Gustavus alumni worldwide to provide students with role models of successful graduates throughout the world.

## GOAL 4: ENGAGE FAITH TO INSPIRE UNDERSTANDING AND LIVES OF LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE.

As a Lutheran college, Gustavus has a special responsibility in the landscape of American higher education to challenge our students to examine and to develop a mature understanding of their personal lives of faith and a true sense of vocation. As a liberal arts college in the Lutheran tradition in the twenty-first century, Gustavus has a responsibility to develop in community members an engagement with faith traditions other than their own. As a member of the ELCA college network, Gustavus is also called to develop sustained relationships with ELCA congregations to enrich the dialogue and learning between institutions.

- 4.1 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Challenge all students to develop a mature understanding of Christian faith and a deeper sense of vocation and reflective practice.
- 4.2 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Develop and sustain an interfaith culture and habits of interfaith dialogue.
- 4.3 *STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Develop Gustavus' relationship to regional, national, and international Lutheran congregations as centers of faith and lifelong learning and venues for learning, artistic performance, and student recruitment.

## GOAL 5: ENGAGE IN RESPONSIBLE AND ETHICAL STEWARDSHIP.

Gustavus' Core Values mandate appropriate stewardship of our human (students, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni, friends), environmental, capital, and financial resources. Minimizing the environmental impact of campus practices and decisions, responsible fiscal policies, staff and faculty development and compensation, and planning and renewal of strategic goals are all part of our stewardship responsibilities.

*5.1 STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Support and nurture vocational discernment of all who work at Gustavus.

*5.2 STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Increase engagement with our alumni to enable them to actively advance and engage in the mission of the College.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Engage current students as part of the alumni continuum to increase awareness of their future role as responsible stewards.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Establish a dynamic Class Agent model for alumni engagement.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Staff appropriately the Alumni Relations Office.

*5.3 STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Set competitive compensation goals for staff, faculty, and administrators informed by appropriate budget models and timeframes by which to meet these goals.

*5.4 STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Build the College's endowment and other key financial resources.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Staff appropriately the Office of Institutional Advancement.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Initiate a plan for a series of campaigns to be carried out over the next decade.

*5.5 STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Practice responsible environmental stewardship within the campus infrastructure and operations.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Reduce water and energy use and waste generation.

*Tactic (e.g.)* Engage in responsible construction, maintenance, and renovation practices.

*5.6 STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:* Engage in ongoing strategic planning throughout the College in a manner linked to responsible resource management.

## THE LIBERAL ARTS AS A DEFINING TRADITION FOR GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

Gustavus understands itself as the inheritor of a liberal arts tradition, which it also seeks to pass on.

This tradition educates students to fulfill their full potential as free humans. This tradition is not limited to a canonical set of “liberal arts subjects,” nor is it embodied exclusively in general education. Rather, the College aims to live out the liberal arts tradition in all of its educational programs, including those leading to professional credentials and those not bearing academic credit.

The College’s liberal arts orientation leads students to learn about themselves and others. They come to understand the cultural, natural, religious, and social environments and processes which have shaped a wide variety of human lives and to see the ways in which those environments and processes have changed and continue to change. They develop the ability to think reasonably, to communicate persuasively, and to act confidently in order to participate in public life. And they cultivate concern for others that reaches beyond their own circle of family and friends.

This form of learning enhances human freedom both by encouraging independence in thought and action and by encouraging commitment to specific communities. When students learn to think critically about their own lives and origins they are freed from habits, prejudices, and attitudes that restrict their ability to receive new truths and perspectives. When students become open to the experiences and viewpoints held by people from other times, places, and social situations, they are freed to imagine a world outside the limitations of their individuality. And when students develop the knowledge and skills they need to work effectively within community, they are freed for the fulfillment of service to others and with others.

The liberal arts orientation preserves a valued place for knowledge and skills that are not immediately useful makes space for times of reflection and encourages a pursuit of truth for its own sake. This same orientation encourages students to participate in arts, athletics, and advocacy apart from professional considerations. The College’s liberal arts orientation is compatible with preprofessional education when that education emphasizes the human wholeness of professional practitioners and those they serve. In all, the liberal arts orientation equips graduates to understand the changing world in which they live and to thrive in adapting to that change. It understands that the pursuit of a vocation is an activity distinct from qualifying for a job.

The College aims not only to live out the liberal arts, but to articulate effectively and publicly the values that undergird them and the value of this education for individuals of all social and economic backgrounds and their communities. As it communicates with its publics — those who would attend, support, work for, or evaluate it — the College works to promote an informed and sympathetic understanding of its liberal arts mission and to secure a wider base of support for that mission.

## GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE: STATEMENT OF CHURCH-RELATEDNESS

Gustavus affirms its identity as a church-related college. This relationship puts it in partnership with the Lutheran Church (ELCA), though not under its direct control. The relationship is one of mutual benefit.

The living Lutheran tradition provides a foundation for the College's educational vision. Guided by that vision and by the ideals of the liberal arts, the College's goal is to seek wisdom and to educate community-oriented leaders to serve society. To this end, Gustavus strives for academic excellence. Because genuine service must be guided by a profound understanding of people and by accurate information about the world, the underlying tradition supports intellectual achievement, creativity, and discovery in the arts, the sciences, and the humanities. It understands genuine service to involve a courageous commitment to justice, love, wholeness, and human dignity, a commitment that must often be carried out in the face of countervailing societal pressures.

At the same time as the Lutheran tradition supports a commitment to academic excellence, it also suggests caution regarding the misuse and limitations of knowledge. This caution grows out of its recognition that the purpose of knowledge is to enhance wisdom, and the purpose of wisdom is to serve humans effectively and well. Unyielding ideologies, whether secular or religious, claim to know more than is warranted and ultimately harm humans rather than assist them.

The College embraces the tradition's sense of wonder—a wonder that nourishes curiosity as well as caution; a wonder that inspires music, art, and literature; a wonder that inspires lives of gratitude and service.

In addition, it affirms that tradition's understanding of human beings, regarding them, though flawed and subject to the pressures of societal evil, to be intended for freedom and responsibility. This freedom, as Martin Luther described it, is both a freedom from enslavement to false ideas and distorted priorities and a freedom for full, humane, courageously ethical living. Here the College's educational vision incorporates the insights of the liberal arts — that is, of those studies that foster human freedom — alongside those of the Lutheran tradition. For the latter, the chief ethical responsibility is to serve the community and the neighbor, and to this service every person is called. As an expression of genuine freedom, such service grows out of gratitude for the gifts of life. Moreover, the way to this genuine freedom is not through a diminishment of communal ties, ecological responsibility, and religious awareness but through a deeper, reconceived involvement. Genuine freedom thus acknowledges multiple levels of connectedness.

The Lutheran tradition provides a foundation for inclusiveness. It is global in scope. It sees God active in the entire world, behind the scenes, working through human agency to foster human dignity, justice, and wholeness. It honors contributions from anyone anywhere to the well-being

of others. The breadth of this theological outlook invites the College to understand its educational purpose equally broadly, while at the same time without any contradiction, acknowledging that its educational vision is formed and shaped by the insights of the Christian faith. The College, quite appropriately, seeks to create and sustain an environment in which people of many different backgrounds can together pursue wisdom and learning, with each member of the academic community benefiting from the insights brought by others.

Gustavus is thus both a rooted and an inclusive community, rooted in an educational vision shaped by the Lutheran tradition, and inclusive in seeking ways to serve society as a whole and welcoming all who share that educational vision. To say that such rootedness and inclusiveness are compatible does not imply that their implications are easily decided. The College is a community of deliberation. One topic for ongoing discussion is how best to serve contemporary society. Though faith and reason are not incompatible, their exact relationship is a matter of exploration. The Lutheran tradition endorses the importance of ongoing examination, discussion, and debate and supports freedom of inquiry as essential to constructive deliberation.

This understanding of the relationship between rootedness and inclusivity distinguishes the College from other types of institutions. Unlike a secular institution, Gustavus maintains an ongoing dialogue with its own religious tradition. It takes the insights and goals of that tradition seriously. In ways appropriate to an academic institution, it explores them and holds them up for consideration. Unlike a sectarian institution, it does not expect internal conformity to any one religious outlook, nor does it see itself as primarily training members of and for a particular faith community. It educates leaders to serve the world, including those who choose to serve the world through the church.

Though the church and the College are intertwined and the church is present in the College's midst, the College and the church are distinguishable. A church is a community of believers, called together by the good news regarding Jesus Christ. Gustavus offers opportunities for worship, provides pastoral care through its chaplains and others, fosters lives of service, and invites its faculty and staff to mentor students into a mature faith as well as into academic disciplines, but the College is not itself a church. Gustavus is an educational community that is built around the Lutheran Church's understanding of the purpose of education, its vision of a transformed world, and its expectations regarding the convergence of faith, reason, and service.

As a church-related college, Gustavus is called to serve the world. It does so by seeking the truth and speaking truthfully, by educating students and nurturing them as whole persons, by raising up courageously compassionate communal leaders, by modeling constructive deliberation, by cooperating creatively with community partners, and by standing for justice. As a church-related college, Gustavus also seeks to assist the community of faith, not only by educating its future leaders but also by inspiring in its members a lively vision of a transformed world and by helping to equip them to care for that world more effectively.

Gustavus affirms its connection to the Lutheran Church and its rootedness in the Lutheran tradition, because these relationships are essential to its identity and because they deepen and strengthen its educational mission as a residential, liberal arts college.



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Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs | 800 West College Avenue | St. Peter, Minnesota 56082  
507/933-7541 | 507/933-7081 FAX | [provostoffice@gustavus.edu](mailto:provostoffice@gustavus.edu) | [gustavus.edu](http://gustavus.edu)