

PLANNING PROCESS

OCTOBER 2020

As we turn our view to the future and to the sustainability and vitality of The University of Akron, we will restart the planning process we began last fall.

For several months last year, the Strategic Working Group (SWG) developed a draft strategic action plan, which is available on the Affirming Our Promises [website](#). Using the excellent work from that group, along with additional clarification and enhancements by the Drafting and Integration Group, the President and Provost present below an action plan, in initial form, that begins in January 2021 and runs through June 2022.

The newly formed University Planning Group, led by Dr. Steve Ash and with membership from University Council Executive Committee and other UA representatives, will review the action plan draft, share the draft plan broadly, seek feedback, and summarize recommendations for the president's consideration by the end of the Fall semester.

The University Planning Group will then build a continuous planning process and the next two-year plan, which will be in effect from July 2022 through June 2024. The plan will be action-oriented with a goal of achieving our University vision. The group will also recommend a cycle for planning and a path for integrating planning work into University Council and Board of Trustees governance processes. This will be imbedded into a larger integrated planning process and governance structure.

The remainder of this document provides President Miller's vision for The University of Akron, the draft action plan through June 2022, and next steps in our planning process.

VISION

The University of Akron will be a leading public urban research university with an unsurpassed commitment to community engagement with a great American legacy city, Akron.

We will be an opportunity university for all types of learners.

We will be known as a willing and constructive partner of business, government and the non-profit sector.

We will be an institution of innovation willing to invest in unique approaches that increase opportunity for students and reduce costs.

We will be a diverse and inclusive university.

We will sponsor an array of superb academic programs relevant to the future.

We will make and keep promises to our students, ourselves and this community.

ACTION PLAN (Present-June 2022)

This draft plan is based on the work of the Drafting and Integration Group (DIG), which built their plan on the document provided by the Strategic Working Group, and it is organized around five promises included in the DIG's original plan.

We promise to ensure the long-term viability of the University by:

1. Developing, by May 2021, a budget allocation process that incentivizes enrollment growth.
2. Moving aggressively, with a student-informed perspective, to an appropriate post-COVID higher education model of delivery.
3. Increasing opportunities and acting on challenges in our various market segments both regionally and internationally.
4. Sharpening our storytelling of the Akron Experience—what students, faculty and community gain from their interaction with The University of Akron.

We promise to provide education to and share knowledge with those who seek it by:

1. Aligning the student and academic affairs offices to meet ALL support and advising needs for ALL students, traditional and non-traditional.
2. Providing faculty the necessary support needed to meet increased retention and progression targets, as well as learning outcomes.
3. Invigorating faculty involvement with current and prospective students.
4. Continuing to invest in and grow the number of fully online programs.
5. Developing new or expanding current programs that are in demand or provide alternative pathways to completing a degree.

We promise to increase our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by:

1. Deploying our student services and advising to reduce or eliminate current disparities in educational outcomes.
2. Focusing our admission and financial aid practices to move our student body to more closely mirror our regional demographics.

3. Engaging in renewed efforts to increase all elements of diversity among the University's workforce.
4. Providing engaged self-learning programs that will encourage faculty, students and staff, both majority and minority, to engage in deliberative and reflective conversations about inclusion and equity.

We promise to nurture research and innovation by:

1. Revitalizing the Office of Research Administration and the operations of the University of Akron Research Foundation, including hiring permanent leadership.
2. Considering the facilities and administration (F & A) allocation process within the larger University budget process, with the goal to foster and incentivize externally supported research.
3. Reviewing and adjusting current policy or practices that pose obstacles or disincentives for faculty in their scholarly pursuits.

We promise to connect to and serve our community by:

1. Launching a single, one-stop professional and continuing education office for non-credit bearing training.
2. Partnering with local business, government and non-profit enterprises to provide experiential learning, service learning, and applied research opportunities that matter for our region.
3. Reconnecting and growing our town-gown relationship through the arts, especially through revitalized programming and community use of EJ Thomas Hall.

NEXT STEPS AND CHARGE TO THE PLANNING GROUP

Task 1: The University Planning Group, led by Steve Ash, will involve the University Council Executive Committee in the review and development process. The group will provide feedback on the draft action plan (above) by the end of the Fall semester.

Task 2: The University Planning Group will frame an ongoing two-year planning cycle that includes a process to monitor progress, adjust University-level goals, and cascade the process and plan to the department or college level. Completion Date: June 2021.

Task 3: The University Planning Group will develop the subsequent two-year plan in a manner that affords a smooth launch of that plan by July 2021.