



A COMMUNITY 2018 - 2023
OF MISSION
Strategic Plan for Harding University



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Introduction

Strategic planning is a vital and ongoing process at Harding University. For 30 years, it has been a formal activity at the University, and new strategic plans have been developed every five years. While assessing, reviewing, listening, dreaming, defining, implementing, measuring and adjusting never cease, every five years we focus on strategic planning in a more concentrated way as we chart the course for Harding's future. This document is the result of such a yearlong effort.

The formal beginning of this strategic planning process occurred in April 2017 when I presented five presidential priorities to the University Cabinet. After the ideas were vetted and refined by the Cabinet, I presented them to the Board of Trustees in the May board meeting. Later that month, the Board of Trustees met in Branson, MO, to further engage and develop the five priorities in a retreat setting. Following these early exercises in refinement, the five priorities were presented to the faculty and staff early in August at the beginning of the fall semester. The circles of engagement then radiated out to include students, the President's Council, alumni, parents and friends of Harding. Every group was invited and encouraged to share their ideas through an online portal that was designed for this process. A final exercise in the fine-tuning of the plan involved focus groups that were conducted in Nashville, Tennessee, Dallas, Texas, and in Little Rock and Bentonville, Arkansas. These took place in March and April 2018.

Dr. David Collins has chaired the strategic planning task force, and he has led a team of campus leaders through the challenge of translating masses of input into a clear and meaningful strategic plan. As a final step, I worked with Dr. Collins and the Cabinet at the end of this process to ensure that the five presidential priorities with which this yearlong process began were, indeed, the five priorities of the finished plan. This new five-year strategic plan for Harding University was presented to the Harding University Board of Trustees in May 2018 and received final approval.

A strategic plan is a living document. It is more like a streaming video than it is like a snapshot. While the broader strategic initiatives of the plan were approved by the Board of Trustees, our work will continue through the dynamic process of specific, concrete and measurable action items (bullets) being developed and added to the plan. Each action item will immediately become the responsibility of a specific member of the President's Cabinet, will be allocated funding if necessary, will be assigned specific measures of success, and will be given a timeline for implementation. The plan will be posted and readily accessible to the entire Harding community on the University website.

As the five-year cycle progresses, each action item will be monitored in the context of Cabinet meetings and the semi-annual Board meetings. Most action items will be accomplished; some may be added, changed or deleted; all will be assessed and reported. This has been and will continue to be a monumental process, and Harding University will be changed for the better because of it.



Bruce D. McLarty
August 2018

“This has been and will continue to be a monumental process, and Harding University will be changed for the better because of it.”

Strategic Priority 1: A Christ-Focused Community of Mission

Both biblical history and the history of Christian higher education bear witness that faith commitments often fade with time and eventually disappear. A once vibrant spiritual identity can easily degrade into nothing more than a curious detail of our past and no longer a living commitment in our present. During this strategic planning process, the Harding University Community of Mission was challenged to address, as if for the first time, the assignment of making Jesus Christ the center of the Harding classroom and the entire Harding campus. These strategic initiatives with action items are the result of this challenge:

Broaden the utilization of the Embracing the Mission curriculum to include faculty, staff and students to strengthen the focus and unity of a shared vision.

- Develop a means to assess and maintain teaching Christianity in the classroom.
- Incorporate Embracing the Mission into chapel curriculum.
- Incorporate Embracing the Mission into annual staff pre-session conference.

Develop a more systematic university approach to measuring student spiritual development to ensure students' spiritual wellness as a result of attending Harding.

- Expand spiritual development assessment tools to include instruments validated through scholarly methods.
- Implement university learning outcomes assessment plan as related to biblical knowledge and application.

- Charge the Spiritual Life Committee with utilizing the data to provide oversight and make recommendations regarding student spiritual development.

Continually reaffirm our commitment to meaningful daily chapel services.

- Develop a written curriculum for chapel to include recurring and relevant topics, series and programs.
- Develop associated co-curricular learning outcomes and assessment measures for chapel curriculum.

Create a standardized and more formal means of facilitating meaningful service learning and community service opportunities for students and employees.

- Integrate more service learning into the academic curricula leading to students' deeper understanding of world issues such as poverty, hunger and social issues.





- Create more opportunities for service to the community by organizations, clubs and teams.
- Introduce new students to service via first year experience as well as through freshman and transfer Bible classes.
- Increase the number of employees mentoring students and advising student organizations.
- Motivate and measure service participation, demonstrating impact on communities served, and assess program overall.

Implement culminating Bible courses within each college that prepare students for a life of Christian professional service.

- Examine existing discipline-specific Bible courses to glean best practices for curricular structure and faculty collaboration.
- Renew the standardized approach for structure of culminating Bible courses.

Promote student understanding of the importance of establishing a strong, lifelong commitment to participation in a local congregation.

- Expand current efforts to increase student involvement in intergenerational work of local congregations, engaging Bible faculty and local ministers in this effort.

- Establish a system for placing graduates and alumni in churches upon relocation, coordinating with both local church leaders and alumni.
- Include participation in church ministries as a key component of service learning efforts.

Mobilize students and alumni for evangelism and church planting both nationally and internationally.

- Host an evangelism and church planting seminar.
- Establish an endowed chair in the Center for World Missions to support church planting efforts.
- Increase scholarship and discount options for Bible and Ministry majors and children of missionaries.

Engage government leaders and regulatory bodies to preserve our faith-based mission.



Strategic Priority 2: An Affordable Community of Mission

Cost is an area where Harding University is committed to moving from “good” to “great” in the next five years. While we are presently very economically priced for private higher education, we will not rest until every qualified student who wishes to come to Harding can afford to do so. That is why in this strategic plan, the full creative resources of the Harding community have been brought to bear on this challenge. During this strategic planning process, the Harding University Community of Mission was challenged to find bold new ways to combine stewardship and philanthropy to make a Harding education even more affordable for all students. These strategic initiatives with action items are the result of this challenge:

Develop and initiate the largest comprehensive campaign in the history of Harding.

- Leverage the University’s 2024 centennial celebration, involving faculty, staff, board of trustees and volunteers in the campaign.
- Use more than half of the funds raised as part of the comprehensive campaign to support student scholarships and tuition reduction initiatives.
- Utilize external consultants for feasibility study and support to ensure best practices.

Double the endowment fund for the specific purpose of controlling student tuition cost.

- Expand estate planning efforts.
- Create a significant fund within the endowment to support students with demonstrated financial need.
- Invest endowment assets to produce optimal returns while assuming a moderate level of investment risk.

Rework pricing and scholarship structures to better meet student needs.

- Utilizing external resources, establish data-informed protocols to structure aid.
- Explore variable pricing modeling.
- Add ADVANCE scholarships for enrolling students that increase as students successfully complete the developmental education program.

- Modify undergraduate scholarship strategy to allow more flexibility in use of scholarships, including summer offerings.
- Enhance data-informed protocols for setting graduate and professional program pricing to keep student cost of attendance affordable as compared to peer institutions.

Decrease student costs related to classroom support materials.

- Create committee of bookstore and library staff along with faculty to address issues and create awareness related to options available for decreasing cost of textbooks.
- Provide support and education for faculty to encourage adoption of cost-reducing tools related to classroom support materials.
- Revise and simplify course fee structure.

Provide students with increased employment opportunities on and off campus while enrolled at Harding.

- Pilot and expand a program for qualifying students to maximize work study funds by prioritizing placement of students with demonstrated financial need into student jobs.
- Host community-wide college student job fair at the beginning of each semester.
- Develop partnerships with local businesses, including connections through the Searcy Chamber of Commerce.



Engage students in financial literacy training for sound Christian stewardship.

- Develop more extensive policies and procedures for financial aid counseling for students acquiring loans, especially high balance borrowers.
- Integrate Christian stewardship into the undergraduate curriculum and other program offerings.

Enable undergraduate students to more easily pursue post-baccalaureate graduate/professional study at Harding.

- Establish accelerated degree paths supported by financial aid incentives.
- Connect graduate and professional programs more closely to their undergraduate feeder programs.

Engage all members of the campus community in reducing university expenses.

- Develop a personnel attrition planning model and approach for reorganizing and creating efficiencies.
- Improve energy savings by using temperature limiting thermostats and lighting occupancy sensors on all new construction and renovations along with consideration in older buildings. Evaluate efficiency of HVAC and major equipment.

Replace fluorescent lighting with LED lighting.

- Evaluate and enhance budget processes.

Improve operational efficiency through emerging technologies.

- Review current technology and retire obsolete products and services to ensure that technology is properly supported by vendors.
- Move M-drives and other shares to a secure cloud service.
- Deploy Chromebook and similar devices where appropriate.
- Implement managed print services to reduce printer wastage.
- Replace Nortel telephone PBX with VoIP system.

Implement clear messaging that conveys the quality and affordability of the spiritual, academic and experiential distinctiveness of Harding.

- Use external consultant to develop quality and affordability message.
- Systematically communicate quality and affordability message via all marketing channels and content.

Strategic Priority 3: A Successful Community of Mission

The conviction of Harding University is that academic excellence is deeply rooted in our spiritual commitments. We clearly hear the call of Jesus to “love the Lord . . . with all (our) mind” (Matthew 22:37). That is why Harding is committed to maintaining and enhancing high quality academic and support programming that promotes educational and professional success. We want our students to retain, persist, graduate and excel in graduate school and job placement at even higher levels than before. These are areas where we can quantitatively move the needle in the next five years. During this strategic planning process, the Harding University Community of Mission was challenged to develop new strategies for helping our students succeed and excel. These strategic initiatives with action items are the result of this challenge:

Strengthen enrollment strategies to drive student interest and grow overall enrollment.

- Provide tools and messaging to admissions and financial aid staff to better educate and motivate prospective students to choose Harding.
- Explore viability of expanding capacity in graduate and professional programs.
- Improve enrollment forecasting ability at all levels.

Enhance program review process to ensure regularity and results that strengthen the future quality of planning, resourcing and improving institutional effectiveness.

- Develop metrics to accompany program review to better inform resource allocation.
- Regularly assess class size to optimize use of full-time faculty and adjunct instructors while maintaining effective faculty to student ratios.
- Create a comprehensive plan for institutional intelligence and research to include data governance.
- Develop a comprehensive system for collecting alumni outcomes data.

Develop a holistic approach to expand career services to focus on student identification and pursuit of calling and vocation.

- Integrate admissions, advising, career services and alumni involvement in career exploration and placement.
- Develop a comprehensive advising process that includes development of a degree plan in the first year.
- Refocus faculty advising involvement from scheduling to vocational mentoring.
- Expand placement initiatives to all colleges, departments and programs.
- Improve advising and support to assist undeclared majors in selecting a major and vocation.





Establish centralized support for undergraduate internships in collaboration with academic units to network externally with professionals, employers and organizations.

- Mobilize alumni and friends to host students in preprofessional experiences in both shadowing and internships.
- Maintain database of alumni willing to provide support to current students and graduates.
- Develop partnerships through international programs with global businesses and organizations to enhance international internship and career opportunities for students.
- Expand internship placement initiatives including fairs and online platforms.

Leverage graduate and undergraduate online education to respond to changing student needs and expectations for course delivery.

- Cast a vision regarding future online offerings.

- Formalize leadership and standardization of current and developing online efforts.
- Develop strategies for increasing summer online enrollment.

Increase transfer enrollment by focusing on admissions and support services specifically tailored to this student population.

- Appoint a transfer recruiter in Admissions.
- Evaluate and enhance transfer scholarship opportunities.
- Develop articulation agreements with additional institutions.
- Develop protocols for advising and mentoring transfer students.
- Enhance first year experience for transfer students.

Develop new advisory boards within undergraduate and graduate/professional academic units to mobilize alumni and friends to support program effectiveness and further university advancement initiatives.



Attain the following measures of success to track progress from recruitment to beyond graduation: freshman retention rate of 85percent, four-year graduation rate of 50percent, six-year graduation rate of 70 percent, and six-months-out employment/graduate school placement rate of 85percent.

- Consistently call community members toward markers of academic success.
- Utilize findings of task force on developmental education to inform changes in the ADVANCE curriculum to improve successful completion.
- Expand centralized support services to graduate/professional students.
- Expand support services for at-risk undergraduate student populations.
- Adopt further measures of student and graduate success.

Establish new endowed chair positions across the University to support respective programs and departments.

- Establish an endowed chair in the Waldron Center for Entrepreneurship and Family Business.

- Establish an endowed chair in the Center for World Missions to support church planting efforts (see also in Christ-Focused).
- Pursue opportunities to establish at least one endowed chair in every college.

Conduct regular environmental scan to determine viable new program offerings.

- Refine new academic program feasibility and approval processes.
- Increase graduate/professional offerings.
- Investigate partnerships with ASU system to provide joint vocational/technical training.
- Pursue affiliation agreements with all community colleges in Arkansas.

Develop resources to improve information discovery and research so students are more efficient and effective in their studies.

- Enhance the capability of the library management system so that it works well with digital and print-based resources.
- Enhance the personal librarian program for first year students with more ways to make personal contact throughout the year such as lunch sessions and library tours.
- Expand the Brackett Library online instruction and self-help resources such as online tutorials, Docline ordering, and a virtual tour of the library.



- Create and provide resources about copyright and ethical use of information.

Improve engagement among prospective students, current students, alumni and friends of the University.

- Challenge alumni, as members of the Harding community, to be more fully engaged in the life and success of the institution through their time and resources.
- Implement a CRM (customer relationship management) system for admissions, student success and advancement.
- Conduct brand research and development to strengthen communications and messaging at all levels of engagement to clearly communicate Harding’s distinctiveness.

Investigate latest technology products and services to ensure the best solutions are in place.

- Explore alternatives and determine future roadmap for enterprise resource program known as Banner.
- Explore the potential of using blockchain, artificial intelligence, open source alternative, and cloud services and implement where and when advantageous.
- Provide the Harding community with the best cybersecurity services, education and awareness including access management systems with multi-factor authentication.

Build and renovate facilities in support of the University’s mission with specific attention to the following:

- Academy
- Benson Auditorium
- Brackett Library
- Football Indoor Practice Facility
- Ganus Building
- Hammon Student Center
- Heritage Inn
- Lee Building
- Legacy Park V
- Residence Halls
- Cathcart
- Graduate
- Kendall
- Soccer Indoor Practice Facility
- Stevens Art Building



Strategic Priority 4: A Diverse Community of Mission

Harding is deeply committed to increasing the racial diversity of the University and to increasing opportunities for women. For us, diversity flows from our belief that “Christ is all, and is in all” (Colossians 3:11). With this strategic plan, what has long been a desire must become a priority. We realize that this will require new perspectives and the allocation of significant new resources. During this strategic planning process, the Harding University Community of Mission was challenged to develop new strategies to accomplish these goals. These strategic initiatives with action items are the result of this challenge:

Strengthen the University through increased racial diversity among the faculty, staff and board.

- Conduct professional development sessions that acquaint hiring supervisors with institutional priorities and best practices for attracting a diverse workforce.
- Explore faculty exchange opportunities and utilize church ministers with academic credentials as visiting instructors to increase diversity among faculty.
- Identify and encourage students from underrepresented races to return to Harding as faculty or administrators.

Actively recruit a more racially diverse student body.

- Ensure a diverse recruiting staff.
- Designate a multicultural resource advisor in support of the admissions team.
- Implement scholarship programs for minority-serving organizations affiliated with churches of Christ, strengthening and expanding awards where possible.
- Train students, staff and faculty who participate in international programs, Global Outreach and spring break missions to provide recruiting materials to interested and promising prospects.
- Provide resources and infrastructure to support underrepresented students beginning with the recruiting process and continuing during their time at Harding.

Initiate programs that intentionally enhance a campus climate where all community members feel welcomed and supported.

- Form a multicultural consortium made up of administrators and faculty with key appointments related to racial and cultural diversity such as Director of Multicultural Student Services, Director of International Student Services, Director of Diversity, and Admissions Multicultural Adviser.
- Increase number of speakers from diverse groups in university programs.
- Provide ongoing racial and cultural competency training and resources to employees to build an environment of awareness, inclusion and respect.

Strengthen partnerships with key external constituencies of diverse composition.

- Build alumni and parent networks among diverse groups, enlisting their cooperation in improving the University and making Harding aware of prospective students and promising job candidates.
- Establish and strengthen the University's relationships with predominantly African-American congregations.
- Establish and strengthen the University's relationships with predominantly Hispanic congregations.
- Establish and strengthen the University's relationships with minority-serving organizations affiliated with churches of Christ.



Actively pursue a greater balance of women and men among administration, faculty, staff and board; and ensure a welcoming and affirming work environment.

- Conduct professional development sessions that acquaint hiring and performance supervisors with institutional priorities and best practices for attracting a diverse workforce.
- Conduct regular audits of compensation based on experience and rank in administrative divisions and academic departments of the University, making equity adjustments to any outliers.
- Use salary survey data when setting compensation amounts for new employees.
- Conduct required professional development sessions for all employees on sexual harassment awareness and prevention every two years.

Develop a more systematic approach to recruiting, selecting and supporting international students.

- Enhance Chinese international program recruiting, support and activities.

- Seek partnerships with countries and private entities to support international students studying at Harding.
- Provide improved orientation and support programs for international students.



Strategic Priority 5: A Collaborative Community of Mission

This priority sprang from my year-long discussion with faculty as we shared lunch and discussed the question: "What is one idea, big or small, that would make Harding University better?" With one voice, the University faculty expressed their desire to work in a more interdisciplinary, collaborative environment. This reflects not only personal longings but also the demands of an increasingly inter-professional work world. Consequently, during this strategic planning process, the Harding University Community of Mission was challenged to envision collaborative processes not only among all academic disciplines but also among administrative units as a way to create a richer learning environment. These strategic initiatives with action items are the result of this challenge:

Engage faculty in a comprehensive review and renewal of the liberal arts program.

- Communicate the distinct and lifelong benefits of the liberal arts to students and external constituencies.
- Identify and address societal needs as expressed by organizations hiring Harding students and graduate/professional schools accepting Harding students.
- Develop student learning outcomes for the liberal arts that correspond with the university learning outcomes.

Support team teaching by establishing procedures that define faculty load, model teamwork, and provide interdisciplinary and interprofessional content.

- Appoint a director of interprofessional education for the Center for Health Sciences.

Leverage existing course offerings into innovative, interdisciplinary degree tracks and certifications.

Expand facilities and services to support holistic faculty growth and development.

- Develop collaboration plan for the Center for Teaching and Learning.
- Develop toolkit for integrating faith into the classroom.

- Encourage and support increased integration of technology in teaching and learning.
- Create opportunities for faculty to meet and eat together.
- Provide summer faculty fellowship stipends to support enhanced student learning and assessment strategies.

Foster transparency and collaboration among faculty, staff and administration in governance processes.

- Increase connecting points between the faculty and staff welfare committees and regular fora for collaboration in the governance process.
- Revise the faculty constitution.
- Establish appropriate balance of centralized administrative services necessary to support graduate and professional academic units.
- Provide employee training regarding budget and accounting processes.
- Create quick access for budget managers to easily understandable financial information.

Expand access to university and community information.

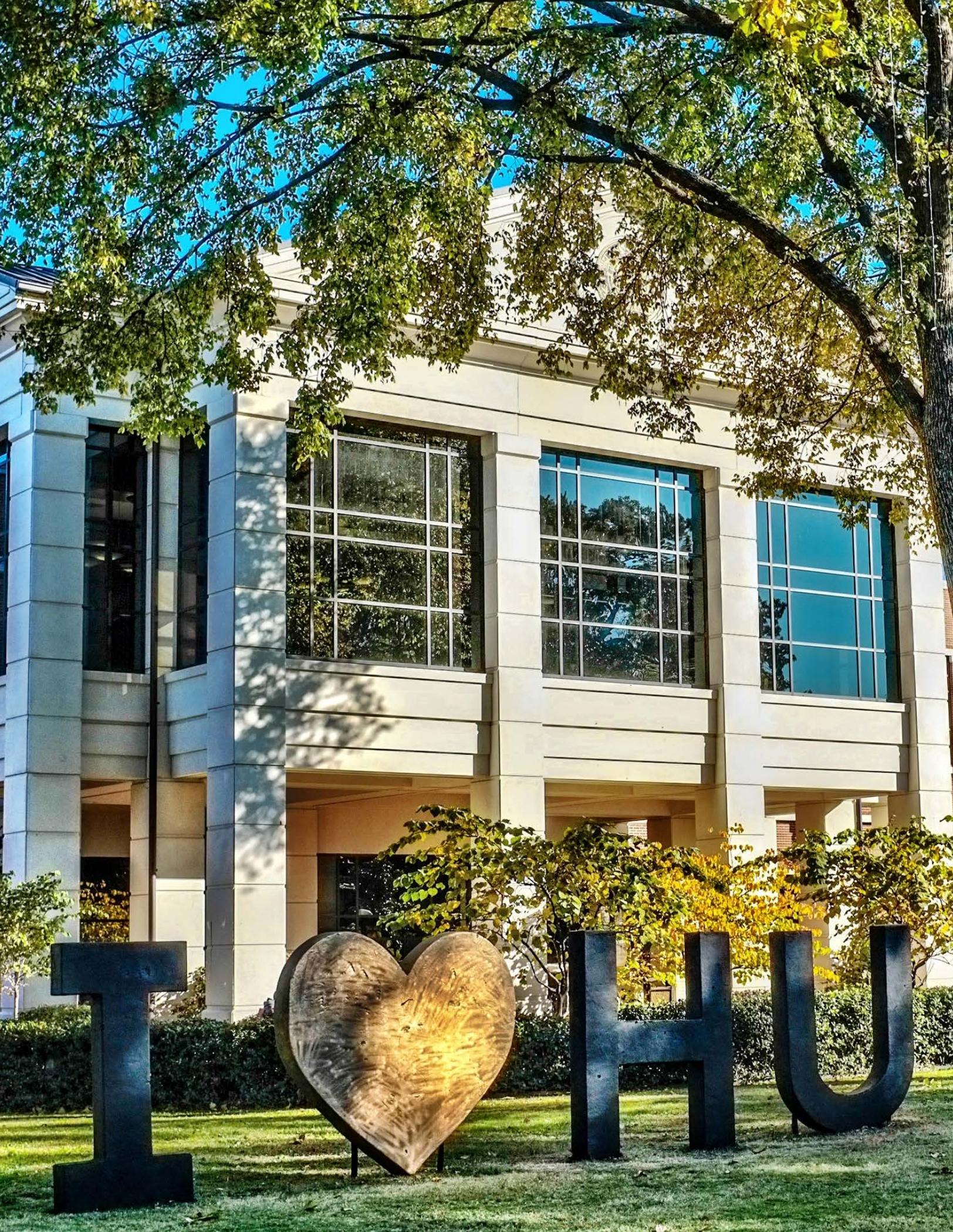
- Complete a major revision of harding.edu.
- Enhance the HardingU app.



- Utilize the extended features of the VoIP system, e.g. automated attendant and Jabber.
- Implement Webex (or other online meeting service) in addition to Zoom for both teaching and remote meeting services.
- Research and promote Google Suite apps and features.
- Increase the training programs available to faculty and staff.

Support efforts that encourage collaborative creativity campus-wide.

- Create faculty-staff learning communities organized by the Center for Teaching and Learning.
- Investigate additional ways in which Harding may connect to the community through academic research and low-cost outreach services.
- Create Harding think tank.
- Strengthen the repository of research, scholarship, creative works, and Harding history.
- Expand the interdisciplinary opportunities of the Waldron Center for Entrepreneurship and Family Business.





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