



CHARTING OUR COURSE



MERCY COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2026

FEBRUARY 22, 2021



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“The simplest and most practical lesson I know...is to resolve to be good today, but better tomorrow.”

Sister Catherine McAuley, Letter to de Sales White, February 28, 1841

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & BOARD CHAIR

On behalf of the Mercy College of Health Sciences Board of Directors, we are pleased to present *Charting Our Course*, the new Mercy College of Health Sciences five-year strategic plan. We'll utilize this touchstone document as a guide over the next five years, as the College realizes its need for a bold new vision: to become a locally and regionally recognized leader, transforming students into healthcare professionals who live out and extend our ministry of healing.

For over 120 years, Mercy College has persisted on a singular path: providing high-quality healthcare education to students in central Iowa. To meet the growing demands for professionally trained nurses, the College was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1899 with an inaugural class of seven nursing students. From that modest beginning, and with a Catholic legacy established by the Sisters of Mercy, the College has grown and flourished. It is rare to find an Iowan who has not encountered a Mercy College-educated healthcare professional, or been impacted by the College's ministry and legacy in some way.

Today, the College offers four bachelor's degrees, six associate degrees, three certificate programs, and provides continuing education opportunities to thousands of Iowans each year. Mercy College PLUS, launched this year, continues our legacy, confronting and resolving barriers through online education. Through radical innovation, MercyPLUS reaches students who may have thought a Mercy College degree was unattainable due to geographic, financial, or other obstacles. We think Sister Catherine McAuley, who founded the Sisters of Mercy, would approve!

We are energized by our legacy and the strategic plan's four pillars: Learning, Caring, Connecting, and Thriving. Through the execution of this plan, Mercy College of Health Sciences will set the standard of healthcare education for the 21st century. We know the College will meet challenges and enjoy opportunities we cannot yet envision. In a time of economic, demographic, technological, and political change and uncertainty, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we teach, learn, and minister to one another. Our planning process and the pandemic have revealed that we must reinforce our commitment to equity and access to meet our students' needs. Reading through this plan and listening to the many people who contributed to it assures us that our historical strengths and our call to minister to those in need are timeless and timely. The College is prepared to meet and respond critically to those challenges.

A heartfelt thank you to the Strategic Planning Committee and the College's dedicated faculty, staff, students, administrators, and Board of Directors. Your thoughtful input has been invaluable to this plan and our success. Together, we continue to chart our course for Mercy College of Health Sciences and all it seeks to serve.

Charting Our Course,

Tom Leahy, JD
Interim President

Paul Erickson
Board Chair



WELCOME FROM THE COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS



The Strategic Planning Committee is proud to present *Charting Our Course* to the Mercy College Board of Directors, our faculty and staff colleagues, and our students and alumni. When we accepted President Douglas J. Fiore’s invitation to serve on this committee, we did not envision 19 months of work, a pandemic that saw us meeting virtually from our home workspaces, nor the challenges of distilling hundreds of comments and ideas into four overarching themes — our four pillars — that will chart the College’s future.

We became an even more collaborative team, thinking quickly and creatively about the College’s role in society, anchoring our efforts in the values and heritage of the Sisters of Mercy that have guided the College for more than 120 years.

Charting Our Course will guide Mercy College of Health Sciences to an inspiring and purposeful future. We are invigorated by both our changing world and our immutable values. We are confident that the College will minister to a rapidly changing world with reverence and innovation, with excellence and equity, with compassion and integrity, with knowledge and discernment.

The culmination of our work called for a bold new vision to turn the aspirations expressed in this plan into realities. As we realize this plan, we commit to becoming a locally and regionally recognized leader, transforming students into healthcare professionals who live out and extend our ministry of healing. We look forward to engaging with each of you to create a bright future for the College, in extension of our healthcare ministry.

Charting Our Course,

Joe Brookover

Joe Brookover, MPA
Senior Director, Financial Aid
Strategic Planning Committee Co-chair
2019-20 Staff Council Chair

Stacy Smith

Stacy Smith, MS
Program Chair, Medical Assisting
Strategic Planning Committee Co-chair

COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Samantha Aust, BS, Board Liaison and Communications Specialist

Bo Bonner, MDiv, Senior Advisor to the President, Mission Initiatives and Spiritual Health

Joe Brookover, MPA, Senior Director, Financial Aid, 2019-20 Staff Council Chair, Strategic Planning Committee Co-chair

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PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW



THE BEGINNING

Mercy College of Health Sciences' strategic plan, *Charting Our Course*, is the product of more than a year of collaborative efforts by the Mercy College community. In response to a charge from Mercy College President Douglas J. Fiore, this comprehensive process launched in June 2019. The planning process brought together the Board of Directors and the College community as they considered the College's strengths and envisioned its

future. In five retreats during the summer of 2019, the 16-member Strategic Planning Committee explored College operations through presentations by senior College leaders, conducted environmental scans of the healthcare field and health sciences education, examined challenges, and assessed the impact of existing and emerging education providers and trends. In the fall of 2019, the Committee facilitated listening sessions with the Mercy College Board of

Directors, faculty, staff, and students. The Committee distilled the results into six domains and three themes, then further condensed these into four pillars. In the spring of 2020, work began to expand these pillars and define accompanying goals and strategies.

ADJUSTING TO CHAOS

In response to a global pandemic, our College operations changed at a speed we once would have thought impossible.

As a result, the Committee took a hiatus as the College made the critical transition to online instruction. The College's thoughtful pandemic response emboldened and energized the Committee, who felt the new world in which we found ourselves mandated the Committee's continued work on the plan.

PRESSING FORWARD

Strategic planning resumed late in the spring of 2020, relying

PLANNING OVERVIEW CONTINUED



on virtual platforms that had become central to our daily work. The Committee aligned the emerging plan structure with their earlier analyses, prioritized strategies in conjunction with the College President and Cabinet, and presented a draft of the emerging plan to the Board of Directors in July 2020. The Committee developed metrics to track the plan's execution, a glossary of terms used in the plan and metrics, and, in conjunction with the President

and Cabinet, assigned responsibilities for implementation. In the waning weeks of the fall 2020 semester, the Committee worked with the Executive Vice President who finalized the plan's format and prepared for publication. The fully developed plan was shared with Mercy College faculty and staff in February 2021, and the Mercy College of Health Sciences Board of Directors approved the plan in March 2021.

CHARTING OUR COURSE

Charting Our Course provides a roadmap for the next five years, building upon principles fundamental to our ministry and propelling us forward to meet new challenges. To effectively chart our course, the Committee recognized the need for a bold new College vision statement to guide us forward: To be a locally and regionally recognized leader, transforming students into healthcare professionals who live out

and extend our ministry of healing. After 19 months of work that included more than 24 in-person and 35 virtual meetings, we produced more than 55 drafts constructed from our hundreds of hours of discussion and input. The culmination of this work leaves us ready to chart our course.



MISSION VISION VALUES

MISSION

Mercy College of Health Sciences prepares graduates for service and leadership in the healthcare community by integrating its core values with a professional and liberal arts and sciences education.

VISION

Mercy College of Health Sciences will be a locally and regionally recognized leader, transforming students into healthcare professionals who live out and extend our ministry of healing.

VALUES

Mercy College of Health Sciences is a Catholic institution of higher education, rooted in the heritage of the Sisters of Mercy, guided by our core values of knowledge, reverence, integrity, compassion, and excellence.

Knowledge – The ability to instill in our college community a thirst to study continually, observe, and investigate the world for facts and ideas that can improve the health and well-being of humankind, as well as create a love for learning.

Reverence – Profound spirit of awe and respect for all creation, shaping relationships to self, to one another, and

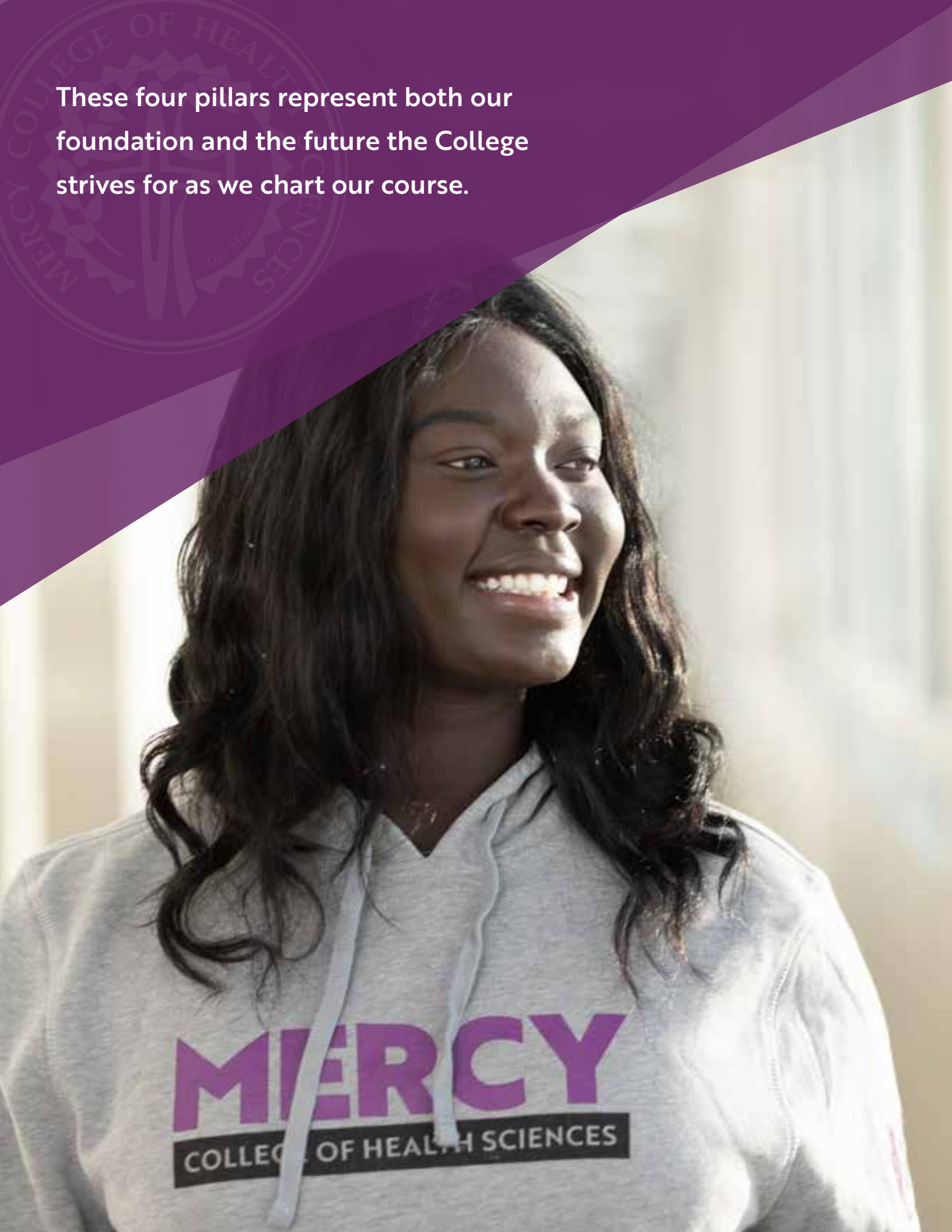
to God, as well as acknowledging that we hold in trust all that has been given to us.

Integrity – Moral wholeness, soundness, uprightness, honesty, and sincerity as the basis of trustworthiness.

Compassion – Feeling with others, being one with others in their sorrows and joy, rooted in the sense of solidarity as members of the human community.

Excellence – Outstanding achievement, merit, and virtue; continuously surpassing standards to achieve and maintain quality.

These four pillars represent both our foundation and the future the College strives for as we chart our course.



PILLAR I
LEARNING

Mercy College of Health Sciences will provide high-quality educational experiences and learning and employment outcomes to a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff.

PILLAR II
CARING

Mercy College will instill a sense of connectedness with the College and others in each college community member, reflecting the College values of compassion and reverence.

PILLAR III
CONNECTING

Mercy College will increase its internal, local, regional, and national connections to empower and promote the healthcare workforce in Iowa and the United States.

PILLAR IV
THRIVING

Mercy College will engage stakeholders in building capacity and scale of College operations, increasing College visibility and promoting growth and expansion.

PILLAR I LEARNING

Mercy College of Health Sciences will provide high-quality educational experiences to a diverse community of students, faculty, administration, and staff, offering opportunities to achieve learning and employment outcomes.



“The adage ‘never too old to learn’ is a great comfort to me.”

Sister Catherine McAuley, Letter to Frances Warde, September 27, 1839



PILLAR I LEARNING

GOAL A Engage all students' capacity to succeed.

STRATEGY 1 Prioritize student retention.

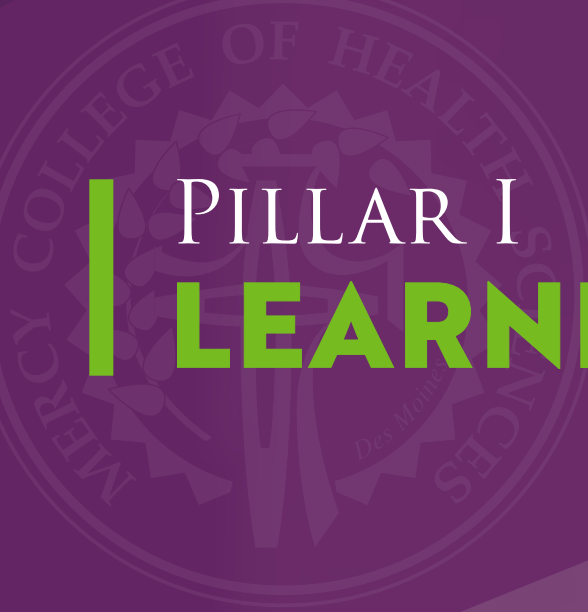
STRATEGY 2 Facilitate student success.

GOAL B Catalyze a vibrant 21st-century learning experience for all students.

STRATEGY 1 Deploy innovative approaches to design new curricula and advance top-quality academic programs.

STRATEGY 2 Champion and enable high-quality teaching.

STRATEGY 3 Acknowledge and redress potential barriers to success across the Mercy College student experience.



PILLAR I LEARNING



GOAL C

Recruit and retain high-quality faculty and staff who are deeply invested in student development and success.

STRATEGY 1

Employ a sufficient number of faculty and staff with the expertise to continue to support the ongoing success of the College.

STRATEGY 2

Attract and retain faculty, administrators, and staff from diverse cultures and groups.

STRATEGY 3

Increase our support for internal and external professional development to foster a continuous improvement culture.



PILLAR II CARING

Mercy College will instill a sense of connectedness with the College and others in each college community member, reflecting the College values of compassion and reverence.

“Our charity is to be cordial. Now cordial signifies something that renews, invigorates, and warms. Such should be the effect of our love for each other.”

Sister Catherine McAuley, Cork Manuscript



MERCY COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES
Des Moines, IA

PILLAR II CARING

GOAL A

Inspire Mercy College students, faculty, and staff to manifest the College's heritage and values in their personal and professional lives.

STRATEGY 1

Inspire faculty, staff, and student understanding of College heritage and values.

STRATEGY 2

Affirm that all members of the College community are seen and treated with dignity.

GOAL B

Foster a culture of human flourishing that integrates wellness, balance, and development in the lives of our students, faculty, and staff, in accordance with the College's mission and Catholic heritage.

STRATEGY 1

Promote student and employee wellness.

STRATEGY 2

Increase faculty and staff satisfaction and promote work/life balance.

PILLAR III

CONNECTING

Mercy College will increase its internal, local, regional, and national connections to empower and promote the healthcare workforce in Iowa and the United States.

“The blessing of unity still dwells amongst us and oh, what a blessing...”

Sister Catherine McAuley, Letter to Elizabeth Moore, Easter Monday, 1841



PILLAR III CONNECTING



GOAL A		Further the College’s reach and increase its impact with Mercy College healthcare affiliates.
STRATEGY 1		Advance relationships with affiliate organizations that result in program growth and increased opportunities for clinical partnerships.
STRATEGY 2		Coordinate with affiliates to create pathways to employment for Mercy College alumni.
GOAL B		Bolster internal and external relationships.
STRATEGY 1		Create an environment that encourages and empowers communication and collaboration among all College administrators, faculty, and staff to achieve the College’s strategic goals.
STRATEGY 2		Increase the College’s reach and impact locally, regionally, and nationally.
STRATEGY 3		Promote student success by encouraging student, employee, and alumni engagement with the College and deepening their relationships with each other.



PILLAR IV **THRIVING**

Mercy College will engage stakeholders in building capacity and scale of College operations, increasing College visibility and promoting growth and expansion.

“...since there is very little good can be accomplished or evil avoided without the aid of money, we must look after it in small as well as in great matters. ”

Sister Catherine McAuley, Letter to Father James Maher, January 10, 1838



PILLAR IV
THRIVING

GOAL A

Develop and scale all campus operations to prepare for future needs and opportunities.

STRATEGY 1

Address the College’s infrastructure needs.

STRATEGY 2

Strive for a safe and healthy campus environment.

GOAL B

Strengthen the College’s presence, visibility, and reputation.

STRATEGY 1

Strengthen outreach and external engagement with Mercy College.

STRATEGY 2

Broaden the College’s networks of alumni and supporters.

GOAL C

Maximize enrollment and revenue through ambitious, entrepreneurial initiatives.

STRATEGY 1

Strategically increase enrollment.

STRATEGY 2

Improve and enhance admission standards and practices.

STRATEGY 3

Sustain current revenue generating initiatives and develop new revenue sources.

KEY CONCEPTS



Assessment

Assessment is a collaborative, intentional, and iterative process of gathering and analyzing information to improve student learning.

[Lee, K. \(2019, March 15\). Guide to assessment. Higher Ed Connects.](#)

Badge

Digital badges are validated indicators of skills or competencies, often representing the completion of a micro-credential. Badges may represent competencies not shown on a transcript, including learning from internships, volunteer work, and other co-curricular activities. Increasingly, badges can be stackable, meaning that they can be credited toward an advanced badge, a certificate, or a degree.

[7 things you should know about badges \(2019\) Educause.](#)

Certification

A credential awarded by a certification body based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that a student has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job. The examination can be either written, oral, or performance-based. Certification is a time-limited credential that is renewed through a recertification process.

[Bielick, S., Cronen, S., Stone, C., Montaquila, J., and Roth, S. \(2013\). The adult training and education survey \(ATES\) pilot study: Technical report \(NCES 2013-190\). National Center for Education Statistics](#)

Co-curricular

Co-curricular refers to activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement, in some way, what students are learning in school—i.e., experiences that are connected to or mirror the academic curriculum. Co-curricular activities are typically, but not always, defined by their separation from academic courses.

[Great Schools Partnerships. \(2013\). Co-curricular.](#)

Diversity

Diversity is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability, or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

[Romney, P. \(2008\). Consulting for diversity and social justice: Challenges and rewards. Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 60\(2\), 139–156. https://doi.org/10.1037/0736-9735.60.2.139](#)

Employee (administration, faculty, and staff) satisfaction

A positive emotional state resulting from the cognitive and affective appraisal of one's job or job experiences, contributing to greater productivity and engagement.

[Saari, L. M., & Judge, T. A. \(2004\). Employee attitudes and job satisfaction. Human Resource Management, 43\(4\), 395-407. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20032](#)

Endorsement

The process by which a registered nurse/licensed practical nurse licensed in another jurisdiction (state) becomes licensed in Iowa.

[Iowa Board of Nursing. \(2019, August 12\). Endorsement - Licensure from Another State.](#)

Expansion sites

Expansion sites include sites at which Mercy College courses or training are offered to a cohort of learners, regardless of delivery model.

High impact learning activities

High-impact learning practices (HIPs) promote deep learning by promoting student engagement. Research shows that HIPs significantly increase retention and success to graduation across all disciplines. Practices include problem-based learning, cohort model, first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, internships, service learning, and capstone courses and projects. Key elements include performance expectations set at appropriately high levels; interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters; frequent, timely, and constructive feedback; periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning; and public demonstration of competence.

[Kuh, G.D. \(2008\). High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. Association of American Colleges & Universities.](#)

Human flourishing

The person's unitary experience of personal dignity, harmony, relative autonomy, contentedness and sense of purpose in life. ...It includes the ability, or potential, to experience a personal relationship with an infinite transcendent reality through inner reflection, contemplation, meditation or prayer; and to express this experience in loving relationships with others and in seeking to fulfill a perceived purpose in life.

[Meehan, T. C. \(2012\). The Careful Nursing philosophy and professional practice model. Journal of clinical nursing, 21\(19\), 2905-2916. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2012.04214.x](#)

License/Licensure

A process by which a governmental agency grants time-limited permission to an individual to engage in a given occupation after verifying that he or she has met predetermined and standardized criteria. Practice in a licensed occupation is restricted to those possessing a license. The requirements for licensure vary by state, based on legislative and regulatory requirements.

[Bielick, S., Cronen, S., Stone, C., Montaquila, J., and Roth, S. \(2013\). The adult training and education survey \(ATES\) pilot study: Technical report \(NCES 2013-190\). National Center for Education Statistics.](#)

KEY CONCEPTS



Mercy College Standards for Rigor

Mercy College of Health Sciences ensures our courses meet the level of rigor appropriate for higher education through our standards for rigor. The Curriculum Committee determines whether a course meets each standard by verifying that the course meets all success criteria listed under each of the following standards. The standards include outcomes, assessment, instructional materials, and learning activities.

Mercy College healthcare affiliates

Organizations that are connected to Mercy College through College Bylaws and share ownership or alignment to CommonSpirit Health.

Micro-credentials

A competency-based digital form of certification. Micro-credentials can be issued for formal and informal professional learning experiences that support developing skills and acquiring knowledge to improve professional practice that supports student success.

[National Education Association. \(n.d.\). Micro-credentials guidance.](#)

Overall undergraduate six-year graduation rate

The proportion of an adjusted cohort that graduates in either:

- + 100%: the nominal time of the program (2 years for Associates degree, 4 years for bachelor's degree, or as appropriate to the type of certificate or other award)
- + 150%: 1.5 times the nominal time (3 years for Associates, 6 years for bachelor's degrees, etc.)

[Higher Learning Commission Defining Student Success Data Initiative. \(2019, February\). Defining student success data: Recommendations for a glossary of terms.](#)

Partner organizations

Schools, colleges, or organizations that are not owned by or aligned with CommonSpirit Health or Catholic Health Initiatives which enter into a clinical, dual credit, or articulation partnership with Mercy College.

[Ard, N., Beasley, S., Nunn-Ellison, K., & Farmer, S. \(2018\). Fundamentals of terminology related to Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. *Teaching and Learning in Nursing*, 13\(4\), A16-A20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.teln.2018.04.003>](#)

Pass rate

The percentage of students or alumni who achieve a passing score on licensure or certification exams.

[Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. \(2016, August\). *Accreditation manual/glossary*.](#)

Retention rate

The continued enrollment of students from one specified time point to the next. Most typically considered from one year to the next but can also be marked by other progression milestones (by semester/quarter, through sequential degree requirements, etc.). Retention is an institutionally-focused measure as it focuses on students' continued enrollment within a specific college or university.

[Higher Learning Commission Defining Student Success Data Initiative. \(2019, February\). *Defining student success data: Recommendations for a glossary of terms*.](#)

Service learning

Service Learning is an experiential learning opportunity that mutually benefits the provider and recipient of service, enhances academic objectives, meets a community-defined need, and encourages a college-wide culture of service. These goals are accomplished through specified project objectives, a structured service activity, and guided reflection.

[Mercy College of Health Sciences. \(2020\). *Graduation requirement: Service learning*.](#)

Student placement rate

The percentage of graduating students who obtained employment either in the recognized occupation for which they were trained or in a related, comparable, recognized occupation within a determined timeframe after receiving their degree or certificate.

[Federal Student Aid. \(n.d.\). *Job placement rate*.](#)

Teaching/delivery modality

Differences in the amount of and/or expectations for face-to-face interaction, the role of the instructor, academic calendar, course schedule, assessment and grading distinguish modalities and formats of learning transfer. The most commonly discussed modalities are traditional or face-to-face, hybrid, or online; synchronous or asynchronous; and competency-based or traditional education.

[Carrol, N. E., & Burke, M. \(2010\). *Learning effectiveness using different teaching modalities. American Journal of Business Education*, 3\(12\), 65-76.](#)

Wellness

Wellness is a holistic approach to health that encompasses emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual well-being.

[Kobrin, M. \(2017\). *Promoting wellness for better behavioral and physical health. Minority Fellowship E-Newsletter*.](#)

Work/life balance

Work-life balance refers to the level of control over the conditions in one's workplace and its harmony with a person's private life.

[Tolhurst, N. \(2010\). *Work-life balance. In W. Visser, D. Matten, M. Pohl, & et al., The A to Z of corporate social responsibility* \(2nd ed.\) Wiley.](#)



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OF HEALTH SCIENCES

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