**Shippensburg University**

**Strategic Plan 2021-24**

**Report for Dissemination**

*Vision:* **Make our world better**by inspiring and equipping individuals to make transformative contributions.

*Mission:* Driven by purpose and truly collaborative engagement, our learning community fosters belonging, honors proven practices, and celebrates achievements.

**Introduction**

Planning---deciding on a direction---and developing the tools to define and monitor progress towards that direction are essential for any institution of higher education. And now may be one of the most important times that a university thinks carefully about its context—the forces likely to shape its future—reflects on its core strengths and comes together to charts its course for the future. Our society is changing in ways that are both fundamental and profound.  New realities are emerging for our society and the role of higher education within it even as the number of high school graduates continues to decline, challenging universities to define their value and purpose ever more clearly. Compounded by COVID-19 and dramatic shifts from the political and social environment to technology’s role in the post- pandemic classroom, Shippensburg University’s answer to the question “Does my institution need to evolve?” [[1]](#footnote-1) seems patently obvious. Change is all around us and either we attempt to exert control over it or we have it imposed on us entirely by outside forces.

How best to view this reshaping? The article “Reimagining Higher Education in the United States,”[[2]](#footnote-2) makes a compelling argument for unconventional thinking. It challenges the shibboleth that universities be well-rounded and concludes “there may be more benefit to creating thoughtful differentiation, building on the institution’s existing strengths, resources, and local context. The question to ask is: ‘What should my institution be known for?’ There are many ways to differentiate, including student populations and educational outcomes, faculty development, research capabilities, facilities, and community impact.”

How then does Ship stand out? On the most essential level, any university--as an embodiment of enlightenment and education--has but one goal: the betterment of society. Faculty members make direct contributions to their disciplines and prepare students to make contributions by imparting knowledge and wisdom, encouraging intellectual curiosity, and cultivating certain academic attitudes and habits of mind. Indeed, seen in this light, every graduate is improving their community in some way, just as every piece of scholarship from every faculty member advances their field of expertise. As an academic institution, we are unique in that the type of scholarship and service at which we excel is oriented to relevant and practical outcomes: the improvement of the lives of real people.  It is so much part of our values that it permeates the fundamental academic work we do.

***Contribution: the act of giving***

***toward the common good.***

*Given the unique blend of talented individuals and existing endeavors at Ship, we are well-positioned to highlight and benefit from the wealth of contributions we make to the world.* The Strategic Planning Oversight Committee (SPOC) work began with a broad conceptualization of community, almost boundless in the digital era, as well as a foregrounding of some concepts not always associated with academia—kindness, generosity, empathy, gratitude, genuine inclusion. Fortunately, these virtues are a fundamental part of the culture at Shippensburg University, appreciated by our faculty, staff and students. But we can and must do better.

To be clear, this focus cannot be considered a mere matter of repackaging—rebranding us as institution that cares about the local community and “gives back.” Certainly, part of this endeavor will include spotlighting important ongoing acts of local volunteerism currently celebrated. It means fully valuing faculty research and what happens in all our classrooms. Our Political Science courses facilitate citizenship; our Teacher Education faculty's work has a multigenerational, cascading impact. Faculty members from disciplines as varied as Social Work and English engage students in grant writing that directly serves the community; the research of undergraduates and professors in History helps to preserve the past while the efforts of those in Biology, Geo/Environmental Studies and Sustainability Studies work to protect our futures. Students in the College of Business not only learn the principles of accounting, but they also apply those when providing free tax assistance to low-income community members. Too numerous to list here, examples could be drawn from every discipline. In addition to all these, we must envision new approaches, tapping the vast talent in our midst.

Opportunities for networking and recruiting will be abundantly clear as we engage with the community, businesses, and schools in ever-expanding ways. During this strategic planning period, as we emerge into the next normal, our university will become renowned not just as an academy of higher learning but a thriving engine of impactful contributions. Illuminating our identity as a caring agent of change and improvement will speak to a generation that of course wants cutting edge job skills and career path options, available at every college. At Ship, they will seek what they yearn for—their truest purpose.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Cornerstone Concept**

As an educational institution, we have a moral obligation to embody the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Truly valuing each individual—student, faculty, staff—is the only way to move closer to realizing our potential. Because they influence every aspect of our environment, these foundational principles will be explored and advanced in a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan being developed in coordination with this effort.

**Background**

Founded in 1871, Shippensburg University has a long and proud history centered on serving the educational, social, and cultural needs of our students. We were the first normal school in Pennsylvania to be chartered as a state teachers college and the first to be accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. We are now a comprehensive university, offering bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs in our College of Arts and Sciences, College of Education and Human Services, and the John L. Grove College of Business.

At Shippensburg University, everyone is welcome and seen as a whole person. We’re a student-centered university that takes a hands-on approach to supporting all members of the campus family. This is evident in the personalized attention our students receive, the passion from our strong alumni network, and the positive impact we have in our town, state and region. Ship is proud to welcome students, faculty and staff from many different national, racial, cultural and religious backgrounds. By striving for a university culture that’s rooted in equity, belonging, and engagement, we can grow and learn from one another, benefitting fully from diverse viewpoints and different talents.

Born of our innovative spirit, we have developed unique academic offerings that prepare our students for the competitive and ever-changing global job market. Ship is the only state university in Pennsylvania to offer Bachelor of Science degrees in civil engineering, computer engineering, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and software engineering. We're also the only state university to offer a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in entrepreneurship from our AACSB-accredited John L. Grove College of Business.

We are proud to have one of only eight Bachelor of Science in criminal justice programs in the United States certified by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, and one of only three programs in Pennsylvania accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. These accreditations are on top of others such as those for programs in computer science, counseling, social work and teacher education. Innovation is in our DNA as Shippensburg University meets the needs of our evolving region through new programs, initiatives, opportunities, and partnerships.

Beyond the classroom, our students engage readily with faculty and staff even as they participate in unique opportunities.  Experiential learning and student research are key components of a Shippensburg education: Minds@Work student research conference, the Center for Land Use and Sustainability, the Brad E. Hollinger Stock Trading Room, the Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University, and the Grace B. Luhrs University Elementary School—the only public elementary lab school in the state. Given our location at the center of the East Coast's major metropolitan areas, our students also have plenty of opportunities to explore all the region has to offer.

Ship's primary commitment is to student learning and personal development through proven approaches in the classroom as well as through a wide variety of high-quality, out-of-class experiences. Our ultimate goal is to have students fully develop their intellectual, personal and social capabilities to perform as active citizens prepared to succeed in their careers and contribute to their communities. We are cognizant of the fact that academic success is not linear for all students and that success may mean different things at different times for students as well as the university. By recognizing each learner’s strengths and challenges, the university is better able to address and measure success across the whole student experience, not solely at the point of graduation.  **Overall, our purpose is to help build a better world through people who have the abilities, skills and values to compete in a complex and evolving society.**

**Strategic Planning Process**

So now what must we do? While the challenges of COVID-19 are most current in our minds, it has also amplified ongoing concerns facing the university: financial pressures from shrinking state support leading to budget cuts and constant pressures to do more with less, recognition of the need for increased efforts to support all students through to their success, and responding effectively to the needs of society wrestling anew with divisiveness and social justice, careers and communities in transition, and the effects of technology. Dynamic challenges are not entirely new to the campus but to respond effectively we must make a renewed commitment to thoughtful analysis and engaged decision-making aided by the creativity and caring that is characteristically Ship. We must collectively decide how to rely on our proven strengths and generate thoughtful new solutions when necessary to not only sustain our future but to thrive. As such, the Strategic Planning Process began with a goal: *Building on the achievements of past (as well as ongoing) planning efforts and viewing them through the lens of our dynamic present, the university’s 2021-2024 Strategic Plan will plot a clear and compelling course for our school’s best future.* The goal is to produce a concise document that articulates our institution’s values, vision, mission, and strategic objectives.

**Tier 1 Charge/Process**

Shippensburg University’s Strategic Planning Process entails two distinct yet complementary tiers. This section illustrates the structural formation of the full process as well as Tier 1 at the operational and tactical level.

#### The 2018 Visioning Plan highlighted four key values, which served as the basis for the creation of four cross-functional insight teams. Members of The Insight Teams were intentionally selected with great care to provide a spectrum of diverse stakeholders and varied perspectives: Each drew from trustees, administrators, faculty, students, and staff. Two Co-Chairs of each Insight Team joined SPOC Co-Chairs Neil Connelly (Professor of English) and Sue Mukherjee (Chief Strategy Office and Senior Associate Provost), Nicole Hill (Dean of the College of Education and Human Services), and Peter Garland (Subject Matter Expert) to form the Strategic Planning Oversight Committee.



Each Insight Team reviewed relevant sections of the [Visioning Team Report](http://www.ship.edu/contentassets/115d7b08c5674854bb72ae696ffd9385/visioning_team_report.pdf) , [the Strategic Plan 2016-2021](http://www.ship.edu/about/leadership/president/strategicplan/) , and recent Middle State Association/Commission on Higher Education reports vis a vis our current reality—the landscape of education post-pandemic, post-George Floyd. For additional context, the teams employed a variety of techniques—content analysis of other key documents, surveys, questionnaires, and focused conversations to expand the voices in the process—as well as rich team discussions and exercises to meet their charge:

* A definition of and core values underlying the priority;
* A succinct profile of the current status of their assigned priority; and
* A focused list of insights/recommendations regarding the assigned priority—what ongoing initiatives need continued support, what’s not working, what new directions might we explore?

On April 15, 2021, each of the Insight Teams submitted concise reports based on their review and team discussions.

**Quality.** The Quality Insight Team defined quality as a *systematic and intentional measurement of varied and diverse experiences that engage the campus community in ways that support their goals and have a positive impact on their current and future success*. Standards of excellence that can serve as the basis for further defining quality: **efficacy, innovation, intentional, student success, and value.** Efforts to measure it systematically are important to the future of the university.

**Student Success.** The work of the Student Success Insight Team focused on ensuring that student success should not be limited to a set of actions but embraced as a mindset. Underlying efforts to enhance student success require attention to **academic persistence, wellness, engagement,** and **career development and leadership.** Essential to enhancing student success is a recognition of the diversity of campus community and the thoughtful alignmentof efforts to ensure positive outcomes for all.

**Community Contributions.** Central to the work of the Community Contributions Insight Team was defining community as *a social group with shared values and beliefs not necessarily bound by geography.* As such, Ship’s communities include the **region**, the commonwealth and beyond; current **students and alumni**; the **professional disciplines, networks and communities** of faculty and staff; and all **those who value the work of the university**. Intentional efforts to include robust community contributions, initiatives, and relationships will strength our work.

**Telling Our Story.** The Telling Our Story Insight Team found evidence of the *kindness, generosity, empathy, gratitude, and genuine inclusion within the four corners of the university,* but these engrained virtues are not told consistently and effectively to all stakeholders. Going forward, themes that need to be highlighted include **connections, quality, support**, and **engagement**. A more comprehensive communications plan will be essential to telling our story to prospective students, current students, parents, faculty and staff; employers, alumni, and policymakers on proposed themes.

**Putting It Together**

Beyond these brief highlights, the complete reports, particularly their recommendations, formed the basis of extensive discussions by the Strategic Plan Oversight Committee leading to following critical elements of Shippensburg’s next strategic plan: vision, mission, values, and strategic objectives.

To provide context, it’s important to note that each team emphasized the many successful ongoing endeavors and projects on campus. We came to recognize that while the need may arise for new initiatives, this plan must affirm and support what’s already working well. To best prepare for the challenges of the future, we must collectively decide how to rely on our proven strengths and generate thoughtful new solutions when necessary, thus galvanizing our efforts

**Proposed Vision and Mission**

*Vision:* **Make our world better**by inspiring and equipping individuals to make transformative contributions.

*Mission:* Driven by purpose and truly collaborative engagement, our learning community fosters belonging, honors proven practices, and celebrates achievements.

Shippensburg University’s **Core Values:**

* **Belonging**: we strive to be a community that is welcoming by embracing differences in order to ensure a nurturing institution that is constantly evolving to be better.
* **Engagement**: in everything we do we commit to listen thoughtfully and share ideas and experiences designed to cultivate understanding and provoke new insights.
* **Openness**: we endeavor to provide information and insight that is easily accessible to every member of our community to optimize decision-making and achievement for all.
* **Synergy**: we leverage talent and resources efficiently across the university to achieve the best from and contribute the best to every member of our community.
* **Excellence**: every activity in which we engage is driven by improving performance through evaluation, assessment, and reflection.
* **Impact**: we affirm that the very purpose of education is to make positive contributions in the lives of our students who as graduates transform communities.

Shippensburg University’s **Strategic Objectives**

* **Attract and serve** adiverse array of students, faculty and staff to a dynamic learning community committed to individual and collective success.
* **Align** resources across the campus to ensure access, accountability, and sustainability while supporting the university’s values.
* **Galvanize** efforts promoting a sense of wellness, belonging, and clarity of purpose.
* **Cultivate** student, faculty, and staff engagement and educational experiences that enrich.
* **Welcome** differences, foster inclusion, and achieve equitable outcomes.
* **Amplify** open communication to foster collaboration, mutual support, and highlight Shippensburg University’s unique contributions.
* **Establish and measure** performance against standards of excellence.
* **Support and celebrate** creativity, scholarship, and community contributions.

**Campus Engagement: History and Next Steps**

Established at the project’s origin, a guiding tenet has been the value of diverse stakeholder views. From the 70 members of our Insight Teams to the students, alumni, and staff they contacted, to the trustees who joined them, all the way through consultation with key governance bodies, the process is designed to produce a truly collaborative vision.

University President

APSCUF President

Provost

Executive Management Team

Insight Team Co-Chairs

APSCUF Rep Council

Dept. Meetings, Website

Arts & Science College Council

Deans

College of Business College Council

College of Education and Human Services Council

President’s Leadership Academy

Student Success/ Exploratory Studies Town Hall

SGA Executive Board

Forum

Student Affairs Council

Council of Chairs and Program Directors

Selected representatives of Council of Trustees

To provide additional sources of feedback, the evolving report will be shared with an Expert Advisory Team composed of alumni, Shippensburg University Foundation representatives, and community members. After considering comments and suggestions from across campus and beyond, a final draft will be prepared for the Council of Trustees consideration in August 2021.

**Tier 2 Charge/Process**

Subsequent to the development of strategic objectives, **Tier 2** of the strategic planning process will turn to:

1. Further define the strategic objectives to be able to identify relevant metrics to ensure accountability and progress toward meeting strategic objectives, and
2. Align the strategic plan and other university plans and processes. One critical need for the University is to develop a comprehensive Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. Coordination will include but not be limited program planning and budget development, facilities master plan, academic master plan, strategic enrollment management plan, and the technology and library plan.

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Appendix A

Insight Team Membership

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| **Quality**Co-chairsLynn BaynumJose RicardoGeorge McIlweeEmily Kramer James HamblinMatt Fetzer Wes Mallicone Alice Armstrong Eric ZeglenMindy FawkesJennifer MilburnRobin DolbinTrina SnyderLorelee IsbellDave Osanitch  | **Student Success**Co-ChairsAshley LewisWendy Kubasko Brian LoweJustin Sentz Laurie Cella Chad Bennett Linwood VereenMichael CoolsenTomoko Grabosky Luis Melara Kapri Brown Shaliyah Kinsley Rochelle Plummer Bill YostAlix Rouby Alison Van Syoc Lance Hines-Butt Lucas EveridgeImani Cameron | **Community Contributions** Co-ChairsMarc Renault Kim GarrisMatt SteckLuke Hershey Cheryl Slattery Allen Dietrich-Ward Viet Dao Wendy Becker Trever R. Famulare Carol Wellington Kirk Moll Alexandra Jones Javita Thompson Victoria KerrMark Chimel Ashley Grimm Holly GarnerTara Zollinger | **Telling Our Story**Co-ChairsMohammad Rahman Lorie DavisChuck BlackChase SlenkerSam Benbow Matt Ramsey Toru Sato Claire Jantz Joohee Sanders Eyoel Delessa Alex Karlheim Maya Mapp Lori SmithKurt Dunkel Alexa Matia Ken BachLeanne Piscotty |

1. As thoughtfully explored in “The New Normal: Higher Education in a post-COVID-19 World”

https://www.tiaainstitute.org/publication/new-normal-higher-education-post-covid-19-world [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/reimagining-higher-education-in-the-united-states [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “Younger generations take the issue of social purpose as a personal calling, and the COVID-19 crisis appears to have bolstered this commitment. Nearly three-fourths of respondents say the pandemic has highlighted new issues and made them more sympathetic to the needs of others. About 70% of respondents say they have already taken actions to have a positive impact on their communities, and nearly three-quarters say they plan to do so once restrictions have been lifted.” https://deloitte.wsj.com/cmo/2020/07/17/pandemic-reveals-resiliency-of-gen-z-millennials/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)