



## **General questions about Wittenberg's and higher education's challenges**

### **Q. What do we say to people who ask about Wittenberg's challenges?**

A. We face significant challenges, not just for Wittenberg, but across higher education. This includes a shrinking pool nationwide of eligible students who are interested in attending college. Our administration and Board are taking action to strengthen career-ready skills for students, to improve campus and residential life, and to diversify our revenue streams. We need and appreciate your support.

### **Q. You said Wittenberg is in trouble. Is the University closing?**

A. No. Wittenberg is fully functional while also evolving to meet future students' needs.

### **Q. What are the specific challenges Wittenberg needs to address?**

A. Our campus and University challenges include:

- A shrinking market of traditional-age students and excess capacity in the sector leading to increased competition.
- Historic buildings with significant maintenance needs.
- Too many buildings for what we need, both residence halls and other buildings.
- For too long, we did not create a culture of philanthropy with consistent, sustained engagement with our alumni.
- We need \$25 million over the next three years above and beyond our typical fund raising.
- \$113 million raised in our recently completed Having Light Campaign is wonderful – but the dollars received have either been spent already or have yet to come in pending pledge completion over the next few years or future estate commitments. While much of the campaign funds raised were budget relieving, it was not a long-term solution.

### **Q. Wittenberg has weathered changes in the past and maintained our traditions. Can we keep doing that?**

A. Wittenberg – and all of higher education – must evolve to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges. Remaining the same, we may survive, but by evolving we will thrive. Thriving takes many forms: Increased community and academic partnerships, diversified revenue opportunities, more students, increased endowment, and improved financials.

### **Q: How has Wittenberg allowed itself to get to this point?**

A: Wittenberg, along with many in higher education, faces significant challenges, including a decline in the proportion of high school graduates going to college, an "enrollment cliff" of fewer high

school graduates, and a decline in student persistence. Undergraduate enrollment has lagged. Our enrollment and revenue per student are up slightly this fall, but we have fallen short of our goals for new students and retention of students. The true cost to educate a student and provide a first-rate student experience is also more than what students and families pay on average; we have always relied on generous donors.

These enrollment and financial challenges, combined with having too many buildings, including historic buildings with significant maintenance needs, are just a few of the issues we face.

### **Actions Being taken by the Board and Administration**

**Q: You said we need strategy, vision, and execution to move forward. What does that look like?**

A: We must reimagine the liberal arts educational experience to prioritize job preparation, to expand hands-on learning opportunities, and grow relationships with employers. Our *Connections Curriculum*, launched in the fall of 2021, provides the framework to do that, and needs to continue moving forward. A new Board-led Eye of the Tiger committee is assisting in researching new revenue streams, as well.

**Q: What can we expect in terms of progress reports?**

A: The Administration and the Board are committed to providing regular and transparent updates.

**Q: What types of actions are being considered?**

A: We are continuing to look carefully across all operational and financial areas for expense cuts and efficiency improvements. We are keeping an open mind toward all options, including merging with another institution, though we are not engaged in any active discussions at this time. Our primary focus is on investing in Wittenberg to make it a place where students can continue to thrive.

### **Financial Details**

**Q. What amount is needed to help Wittenberg survive and thrive?**

A. We need \$25 million over the next three years above and beyond our typical fund raising. We face a budgetary shortfall for the current fiscal year and next, and we believe additional cuts would jeopardize the educational experience we provide. We therefore need to increase support significantly for the *present*, for this year and for those that follow.

**Q: Can Wittenberg dip into its endowment?**

A: The endowment is designed to support Wittenberg and its students in perpetuity, and most of the endowment is restricted to specific purposes. For these reasons, only a limited portion of the endowment is available for general institutional operations.

**Q. Did the recent campaign help with some of the financial challenges?**

A: The Having Light Campaign (2016-2023) was successful and helped Wittenberg move forward in many ways. It supported investments in student success and career exploration, made some facilities improvements possible, and helped us expand and renovate the Health, Wellness, and Athletics Complex.

## **Impact on Current and Future Wittenberg students**

### **Q: What does this mean for Wittenberg's current and future students?**

A: Wittenberg will continue to provide an education that challenges current and future students to become responsible global citizens as it helps them discover their true callings. All our efforts are centered around meeting the needs of students today – and tomorrow. Changes coming in the near future or being considered include:

#### **Enhanced Focus on Career-ready Skills**

- Employers say they want liberal arts students, but the students must also have specific skills.
- More internships and corporate partnerships for all students.
- Implementation of a Professionalism Boot Camp to prepare students for first jobs.
- Adding new programs where there is market demand, i.e., credentials, badges, and professional certificates.

#### **Investments in Residential life**

We need to look at our residential experience. We have too many residential spaces, and many of the ones we have are hurting our competitiveness in recruiting and retaining students. By selecting key residential spaces to renovate, while reducing our overall footprint, we can lower ongoing costs and improve the student experience. Specifically, we will:

- Focus on “belonging” connections, especially for first- and second-year students, to enhance retention.
- Create pocket communities to improve the residential life experience.
- Improve residential student housing.

#### **Right-Sizing the Campus Footprint**

To better match enrollment size, reduce maintenance costs, and generate revenue, we need to downsize the overall physical campus, sell some of our facilities, and re-use others through partnerships. We have an opportunity to right-size the campus infrastructure to realize real financial gains.

### **Q: How will this affect Wittenberg's athletics department and teams?**

A: There are no plans to change our athletic program offerings or reduce our roster sizes at this time. Our teams are performing well, and we are proud to have a state-of-the-art facility that rivals Division I programs. We are reviewing every aspect of what we do to create the best possible student experience. For example, we recently added women's bowling and ended women's water polo.

### **Q: Will Wittenberg reduce the number and dollar amount of scholarships it offers to students?**

A: No. We will continue to provide robust financial aid packages to students. We actually want to increase the number and amount of scholarships we offer to allow those who want to be Tigers to join us.

## **How alumni and others can help?**

### **Q: How can I help?**

A: We need all members of the Wittenberg community to:

- Support Immediate Institutional Priorities online at [giving.wittenberg.edu](https://giving.wittenberg.edu).
- Give what you can in donations today; make a stretch multi-year commitment and in making planned gifts for the future.
- Be active and engaged as we near calendar year-end giving season and Commit to Witt, our annual 24 hours of giving, on March 13, 2024.
- Recommend Wittenberg to potential students and introduce potential students to Wittenberg.
- Host Wittenberg faculty and staff leaders as speakers at community events.
- Share your support and encouragement with students, parents, faculty, staff, administration, board members, and everyone working every day to make Wittenberg the very best it can be.

### **Q: Why should I continue supporting Wittenberg?**

A: Because your Wittenberg degree matters, and it matters for current and future students. We have changed lives since 1845, and the world is a better place with Wittenberg graduates in it. We also believe we have the best leadership in place to help secure the future of Wittenberg in a meaningful way.

By investing in Wittenberg today, you are making an investment in the things that will move us forward. To do this work and thrive, we need dedicated champions to provide support in every way you can. Thank you.