



Analysis of Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results

Fall 2025

As Wittenberg University embarks on a strategic planning process we begin with this analysis of the strengths on which we can build, the opportunities we can leverage, the future to which we aspire, and the results these changes would yield. This S.O.A.R. analysis is intended to spark creative thinking about possible futures for Wittenberg and launch ambition conversations throughout our university community.

Strengths

Wittenberg University enjoys an enviable set of strengths on which we can build. People are the heart of our university. Dedicated faculty and staff, ambitious students, and passionate alumni make Wittenberg excellent. Our scale and our institutional culture allow for a very personalized experience that is a hallmark of our academic programs and throughout our approach to education. And, our place in Springfield and our region is a vital strength for our university going forward.

OUR PEOPLE - The successes of the people who comprise the Wittenberg community constitute our greatest source of strength. Our faculty are excellent scholars who care deeply about student learning. Their close attention to student needs is at the heart of a Wittenberg education. Similarly, our staff care deeply about student development. They have a passion for helping our students excel. Faculty and staff share a 'students first' ethos that is foundational to our academic community. Wittenberg is a close-knit campus and our students are drawn to this environment. The scale of Wittenberg reinforces our strong sense

of community, where students receive individual attention and never feel lost in a crowd. Within this broader campus culture students find further connection with peers through our living and learning communities. Whether in the classroom, in extracurricular activities, or in a social setting the rapport between staff, faculty, and students is a hallmark of Wittenberg and serves to enrich learning and personal growth.

This deep sense of connection extends far beyond graduation. Wittenberg alumni are dedicated to the university community. Alumni are avid in their attachment to the campus and their passion for the university. This strong alumni engagement is a strength for the university as an institution, and at a personal level for students and alumni alike.

OUR PERSONAL APPROACH –

Through the commitment of our dedicated faculty and staff, as well as our passionate alumni, Wittenberg delivers a high quality residential liberal arts education rich in experiential learning where students work closely with faculty. We help each student develop into the person they will become through a

personalized approach. Classes are small and the university's scale fosters opportunity for each learner. Whether a student seeks research opportunities, campus leadership roles, varied experiential learning opportunities, or to participate in collegiate athletics, the university's scale makes all of these possible. This highly customizable academic experience begins on campus in classrooms, laboratories, and student residences, as well as on fields and courts. These opportunities also extend far beyond campus in internships and field work, through civic engagement, and by study abroad. Personal attention is fundamental to our way of learning and is central to our 180-year track record of success. This approach is instrumental to Wittenberg's strong placement rates for students as they transition into graduate school and/or begin their professional lives.

OUR PLACE – While people are the heart of Wittenberg and create the friendly, warm vibe of the university, our

location also serves as a key strength. Our beautiful campus and athletic facilities are integral to what we offer. Our campus provides a lovely, safe place for students to learn and grow. Our existing connections to the surrounding community in and around Springfield greatly enhance what the campus offers through cultural opportunities, community projects, and experiential learning. Wittenberg's roots in Springfield grow deep. The city and university grew together and remain mutual sources of strength.

Our Lutheran heritage is another key dimension of our place in the world. A Wittenberg education attends to students' vocation. A key part of the Wittenberg experience involves discerning one's calling and preparing to meet that future. This relies on our willingness to wrestle with difficult issues as a university community, and to help individuals find their own paths forward. This is how we live our Lutheran foundation today.

Opportunities

As we build on these strengths, Wittenberg can extend the ways in which we personalize education to meet students' interests and employers' needs. In doing so, we can greatly deepen our connection to place by connecting to Springfield and our surrounding communities much more richly. We can also go much further in promoting our successes and do so in ways that grow the number of ambitious young people who come to Wittenberg.

EXTEND PERSONALIZATION – We have the opportunity to significantly enrich the way each student's Wittenberg experience fulfills their needs. Models exist within Wittenberg that we can extend across the student experience in powerful ways. For example, our coaches, student affairs professionals, and faculty work closely with student athletes to identify their passions within

and beyond athletics and thereby connect each student's whole identity and interests, while at the same time building our overall community. We can strengthen connections across campus to accomplish this for each Wittenberg student. In this way, we could leverage our scale and the intimacy of our campus to refine and deepen the ways in which each student develops while enrolled.

We can also listen closely to our students to richly understand what they want to learn and then adapt in ways that meet those interests. In doing so, we would need to remain open as a community to expanding our academic offerings and strengthening the experiential learning we provide. Similarly, we should be open to reframing the way students learn and how they combine interests. For example, we could reorient around solving societal problems in addition to, or instead of, learning structures built around academic disciplines. We can also do more to help our students tie their majors to the careers they want to pursue by enhancing career exploration for each student from an early stage in their learning journey. Each of these examples calls on us to be bolder in further refining communication with our students in the service of enhancing their learning.

This opportunity also pertains to alumni, both for their benefit and for our current students. We can create stronger alumni and student engagement through mentoring programs. We can also ask alumni to play a more active role in student recruitment and retention efforts. To accomplish this, we would need a deeper understanding of interest among alumni and students alike in these sorts of interactions. On that basis we can connect students and alumni in meaningful ways that enhance the Wittenberg experience for each person.

DEEPEN OUR CONNECTION TO PLACE – A key opportunity for Wittenberg lies in building better, deeper partnerships in and around our Springfield community. Our students want to make a difference in the lives of others, and to learn in the process. We

can provide this and strengthen Wittenberg at the same time by expanding opportunities for meaningful civic engagement. This should include enhanced course offerings and class assignments around civic engagement and experiential learning.

We can also make creative use of our spaces on campus in ways that bring the community to the university. We can foster student-run businesses, particularly those that utilize disused spaces on campus. We can collaborate with Springfield to do more cultural programming with and for the community. We can adapt in ways that meet the career readiness needs of learners in Springfield. Another opportunity lies in expanding the use of our athletic facilities in ways that engage the surrounding community. For example, local high schools and clubs could utilize facilities and collaborate with student athletes. We could build a retirement community serving alumni and others who wish to engage in a broad inter-generational learning experience. Whatever our approach, the core element would be rich integration of life on campus with communities around campus.

PROMOTE OUR SUCCESSES - We can tell our story better and more fully, and this is a crucial opportunity for Wittenberg going forward. In doing so, we can focus our message on impact. Wittenberg should be a leader in promoting how liberal arts learning translates to the workforce. One highly effective means of accomplishing this would be through student and alumni success stories. We can share student stories that illustrate how they took an interest and built an academic

experience. We can identify young alumni who leveraged life after Wittenberg to launch their careers. In doing so, we can strengthen and clarify our identity as a place of self-exploration and opportunity-building.

By emphasizing our great outcomes for students, we can richly articulate the relevance and value of liberal arts education. We can communicate the value of experiential learning in our recruitment process and use storytelling

to convey the role this plays in students' professional development. We can communicate the affordability of a Wittenberg degree and demystify financial aid, so students and their families better understand that they can afford to join us. We can also do more concerted recruiting amongst Lutheran students and help them understand how Wittenberg can help them integrate their faith, their identity, and their ambitions in powerful ways.

Aspirations

By building on our strength and utilizing our opportunities we can aspire to a future where we empower students by linking liberal arts traditions and contemporary careers in powerful ways. As part of this effort, we aspire to include alumni and our surrounding community in ways that go far beyond existing models of engagement. Through these efforts we envision a thriving university in the coming years.

EMPOWER STUDENTS – We aspire to lead amongst universities in our ability to deeply engage students and empower them to envision and shape their futures. This begins with transformational learning experiences, and it must also involve close alignment with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions employers seek. To do so we must deeply understand what our students need and how to deliver this through rigorous learning experiences. We aspire to lead the way in balancing our long history of excellence in liberal arts education with purposeful preparation for careers that foster curiosity in our students. By using the old to embrace the new we can combine traditions with contemporary ideas to build our future identity.

We want every student to engage in experiential learning beyond our campus. This could include expanding programming like our FIRE Week (Focused, Integrated, Reflective,

Experience) program. We could create a career-focused analogue for FIRE week with the help of alumni. We can expand internship opportunities and research experiences. Whatever this may include, these experiences would become fundamental at Wittenberg such that every student engaged in these ways.

To prepare our students for success we need to help them become resilient and confident in their capacity to learn and grow; to adapt and succeed. We must cultivate in our students a sense of civic responsibility, responsible political engagement, and a commitment to servant leadership. We can do so by honoring and extending our long history of inspiring students to lead in their communities and preparing them to be global citizens. And, we can do so by building on our long tradition as a Lutheran institution that cares about educating the mind, body, and spirit.

ENGAGE ALUMNI AND COMMUNITY

We aspire to a level of alumni-student engagement that greatly exceeds the norm. Alumni who choose to do so should have a wide variety of ways to meet, inspire, and mentor current students in a variety of settings. Being a student at Wittenberg should include frequent contact with alumni to learn from their experiences, tap their networks, and prepare for successful careers. We also envision a future where every student is paired with an alumni mentor. The personalization of a Wittenberg education can extend beyond campus to richly include our alumni for the benefit of each generation. Ultimately, we aspire to a system of alumni-student mentoring relationships that are so mutually rewarding that we are recognized as a leader in this area.

We also aspire to deep, mutually beneficial connections throughout Springfield and the surrounding communities that enhance daily life. We envision strengthened relationships with schools, civic organizations, businesses, and the city of Springfield. We also envision this expanding community partnership extending across Clark County and far beyond. Our neighbors

should feel at home on our campus, and our students, staff, and faculty should be integral to our surrounding communities. As with alumni-student connections, these interactions should be so beneficial that those involved tout them widely.

EVOLVE AS A UNIVERSITY – We aspire to a thriving university community that is growing, solvent, and well-known as a leader in transformational education. As a nationally recognized liberal arts institution we will see strong demand for admission and increasing enrollment. Prospective students will seek us out on the basis of compelling accounts of our students' educational experiences and the success of our alumni. Our resources will grow accordingly in ways that reinvigorate our facilities such that our physical spaces match our own high expectations. This evolution should also include reenvisioning how our spaces are used to transform access to the campus—making Wittenberg a resource for our community and our alumni in meaningful ways. Our faculty and staff will share in Wittenberg's renaissance in ways that attract and retain excellent professionals because Wittenberg will be widely known as a place people want to work.

Results

The result we seek together is a thriving future for Wittenberg University. Bringing our aspirations to fruition will take sustained, coordinated efforts by many throughout the Wittenberg community. The upcoming strategic planning process will allow us to work together to clearly articulate the future we want to create and to determine how best to achieve those goals. Whatever the specific efforts may be, we envision a future for Wittenberg with an optimistic shared vision of what we create together. This unity of purpose should become a hallmark of Wittenberg; drawing in alumni, partners, and community members. Students should see the effects of this positive, shared purpose in their daily lives on campus and beyond. Staff and faculty should be early beneficiaries of a growing sense of shared purpose and optimism for the future; and they should see the benefits of these efforts in their work-lives.

Given our strengths and the opportunities available to Wittenberg, and based on the aspirations outlined above, we envision a future for the University where:

Well-constructed academic offerings and clearly defined signature programs will differentiate us in ways that prospective students and their families value. Every Wittenberg student will explore their interests through some combination of course-work, experiential learning, hands-on research, community service, and/or career-building internships. This would be a hallmark of a Wittenberg education central to an extraordinary level of integration between the liberal arts and pre-professional programs.

Integration of alumni in the life of the college will enrich the learning and personal growth experienced by our students while also providing alumni with a rewarding, life-long sense of community and connection. This would be an entirely new way to include alumni in the life of a university built around more intentional relationships with students and with one-another. A thriving mentorship program would be central to this effort, with positive results for students such that these connections become a recruitment tool for new students and a feature of the life-long connection alumni have with the university.

Thriving students prepared for fulfilling futures will be our main outcome. We will help each student identify their purpose and empower them to shape their own future. Our focus on each student's intellectual growth will be central to our identity as a university and one of our main ways of drawing ambitious students to Wittenberg. To accomplish this must clearly convey our educational goals, the means by which students learn with us, the ways in which our students identify their purpose, and how we help students launch their careers.

Town-grown relationships will be redefined in ways that make Wittenberg an integral part of Springfield and our region. We would expand our already strong relationships with the community and robustly utilize our campus in ways that are meaningful for our neighbors. We could richly involve students in such a process, with a focus on understanding and connecting with the community both on and off campus. To accomplish this, we would also update and repurpose under-utilized campus spaces to make Wittenberg an academic and cultural destination.