

Lasell University 2021 Strategic Plan

April 30, 2021

We are pleased to report that after collecting input from 12 Idea Creation Groups (ICG's), the academic deans, the senior management team, faculty, staff, students, management council, a whole-community town meeting, and three intensive meetings during one week in April, the Lasell University community has produced a high-level strategic plan that will provide the basis for a shared understanding of how our institution will progress in the coming years. We want to thank the hundreds of people who participated to produce this positive outcome. The following report describes both the process we followed and the documents we produced as a result of that process. (Please note that this report covers the University only, and does not include the Village; Lasell Village produces its own strategic plans.)

The stated goals of the strategic planning process were:

- To get to know each other better, develop strong working relationships, and enhance the feeling that we are part of the same team working towards common purposes and goals
- To refresh our understanding of our current Mission Statement, Statement of Values, and the Positioning of the University
- To develop a new set of goals which collectively will form a picture of how the University will be different, and presumably better, at some point in the future, post-pandemic
- To gain a greater understanding of our University and the environment and market within which we compete

We believe there is a general consensus, supported by the formal evaluation of the culminating meetings, that the process met each of these goals.

The planning process occurred in two stages. Stage I, which took place from November 2020 through February 2021, focused on short-term objectives that could be implemented within the subsequent few months and begin to effect change as soon as fall 2021. The Planning Steering Committee published the Stage I *Speed of Change Report* on March 3, 2021 (see **Appendix A**).

Stage II began in February and culminated in a series of three meetings in late April in which 48 people, representing all Lasell constituencies (students, faculty, staff, Lasell Village residents, trustees, overseers, alumni and neighbors), developed a consensus around 15 prioritized goals. The group decided to set a five-year target for achieving these fundamental and comprehensive goals, and agreed to commit to working together to ensure these changes happen.

Preliminary Meetings

Subsequent to the publishing of the Stage I *Speed of Change Report*, we held a series of meetings in order to obtain broad participation in the planning process, to provide tangible input for the culminating meetings in April, and to introduce the community to the methodology of the process. We held the following series of meetings via Zoom from February through April 2021.

- On February 23, Management Council engaged in a discussion to identify mid- to long-term goals for the University. We brainstormed and prioritized a list of new and concrete goals that, once achieved, could strengthen the University and contribute to the quality of the student experience. A good number of attendees had the opportunity to advocate for a goal that they thought would be most beneficial
- On March 18, the faculty met to discuss how the University should evolve in light of changes in the external environment, the experiences of faculty and students during the pandemic, and the evolving learning needs of students
- On March 25, we held a town meeting for students to engage in a collaborative effort to identify changes that would enhance the experience of future students. We asked the students to think about which changes would provide the greatest benefit for the cost (expressed as not just money, but also time, effort, pain, difficulty of execution and opportunity cost) it would take to achieve those items
- On April 6, University staff met to discuss how life and work on campus and services to students should change in the future, given the experiences of the last year
- On April 13, we welcomed all members of the Lasell Community to a town meeting focused on prioritizing a list of goals identified in previous meetings. Again, we asked participants to base their judgments about priorities on a mental weighing of benefits versus costs

We made the *Report of Town Meeting Discussions* (see **Appendix B**) available to the participants in the culminating meetings in April as background to, and input for, their deliberations.

It is clear from a review of the *Report of Town Meeting Discussions*, and the elements of the strategic plan, that the preliminary meetings had a profound effect on the final outcome of the process.

Culminating Meetings – April 26, 27, and 30, 2021

We then held three meetings via Zoom over one week. The meetings were comprised of sessions in which we broke down into mixed groups for brainstorming, and then came back together for discussion and prioritization of the items produced. We agreed that the prioritized goals should emphasize things that will be new or different rather than things that we will continue to do or are already doing.

We briefly reviewed the Mission, Values, and Positioning Statement of the University (see below). As they had most recently been reviewed and updated in 2019, we agreed they were still valuable as a foundation from which to conduct planning. We did not note that, because the higher education environment and institutions with which we compete had changed, the positioning statement does not describe as distinct an identity for Lasell as it once did. We agreed the positioning statement deserves its own review process at a later date.

We based our prioritization of goals on a collective mental balancing of the costs and benefits of each item, where costs were defined as not just money but also time, energy, pain, opportunities lost and difficulty of execution. We evaluated each item relative to other items under consideration, by asking the following questions: how much benefit would the University receive from an item per unit of cost, or more generally, per unit of pain?

We identified scores of positive goals in our brainstorming sessions. Recognizing the need to focus on a manageable set of goals to ensure that the goals are likely to get the attention necessary to achieve them, the group chose 15 prioritized goals. They are listed below. We expect that many of the goals that did not make the prioritized list will nevertheless be accomplished, in part because of their identification during this process.

At the conclusion of the three April meetings, the participants completed evaluations of the process.

Mission Statement

We immerse students in experiential and collaborative learning that fosters lifelong intellectual exploration and social responsibility.

First developed in October 2017 and reaffirmed in April 2019.

Values

The values we hold that guide our daily decision making

- Student focus
- Integrity, honesty and ethical decision making
- Inclusion and intercultural competence
- Empathy, respect and kindness

Most recently updated in April 2019.

“Student focus” reflects the intention that the intellectual and personal development of students should infuse the work of every department and service at the University as well as the academic program.

Positioning Statement

What Distinctive Spot Can We Own in the Market?

“A legacy of connecting students to careers and community life through a professional education rooted in the liberal arts.”

Since 1851, Lasell University has been dedicated to high-impact educational experiences preparing students for careers and life. Students engage in collaborative, team-based learning through professional internships, service learning projects, and international experiences.

The Positioning Statement is meant to express a concept that provides the basis for a strong and distinctive identity for Lasell University. Our statement was built on the back of our distinctive educational philosophy, which we call “Connected Learning”.

This statement may not describe as distinctive an identity as it once did; we agreed to review and update it through a process to be determined in the near future.

In the meantime, we want to consistently reinforce the idea that, at Lasell, we give our students the opportunity to practice and prepare for the real world through a project-based and problem-based approach to teaching, through exposure to diverse cultures and peoples, through the development of critical skills such as writing and speaking in front of groups, and through the confrontation of, and discussion about, ethical and moral questions.

A Picture of the Future

How will Lasell University be different five years from now?

Academic

- Explore changing to a four credit (or four course) academic model, with students taking four courses and faculty teaching three courses per semester
- Create an academic program that supports Boston's asset management industry
- Create a separate online division of Lasell University with mobile accessibility, recognizing that the next generation is mobile first
 - Add one or two online bachelor's programs per year
- Increase dual-enrollment programs with high school students, including summer credit-bearing courses
- Infuse curriculum with themes of career readiness, intercultural competency, mental health resiliency, and civic engagement
- Make on-campus programming available (but not mandatory) to students year-round, including summers

Students

- Group FYS seminars by housing residence or commuter status, creating a type of living-learning community; assign students to sections to optimize diversity
- Create a guaranteed job placement program, with details to be researched and determined
- Add two staff members to the Donahue Institute
 - Incorporate disability in DEI efforts
 - Provide continuous (weekly) professional development in DEI and intercultural competence for employees
 - Create program (badges) to recognize demonstrations of intercultural competence in students and employees
- Increase availability of student parking (measured by ratio of parking spots to number of students)

Financial

- Increase endowment by 50%
- Raise funds for a new athletic center (with sponsor support)
- Develop shared services partnership with other institutions (IT, business functions, etc.)
- Launch a focused effort to recruit groups of students from corporate and non-profit organizations
 - Ask organizations about their specific staffing and educational needs
 - Design custom programs or offerings
 - Analyze current partnerships and affiliations to add strategically to our advisory boards
 - Hire a corporate relations (or engagement) director in the University Advancement division
- Create a revenue-enhancing department, with realistic expectations for new revenue streams
 - Add five summer program offerings, including Lasell-sponsored programs
 - Create or develop a partnership for an ESL program to attract more international students to campus
 - Leverage our available property for revenue-producing or program-enhancing opportunities

We consider these goals to be dynamic and subject to adjustment and updating as conditions and circumstances change. We intend to review these goals within 12 – 18 months and develop action plans that support their implementation.

The group recognized the inherent conflict, or competition for fundraised dollars, represented by the goals to increase the endowment and raise funds for an athletic center. Nevertheless, the group believed these two goals are among Lasell's highest priorities and should both be included in the plan.

Short-term Objectives – December 2021

*Derived from the Speed of Change Report
(Appendix A)*

1. Infuse industry-recognized credentials into all majors
2. Increase investment in athletics, including the addition of more athletic teams
3. Infuse technology to a greater degree throughout the curriculum
4. Revise Individuals & Society Knowledge Perspective requirement to one course focused on inequality in all its various forms
5. Create a mandatory fiscal responsibility, budgeting and procedural series for all employees
6. Plan the academic/course schedule one year at a time, cross list more courses, and reduce under-enrolled courses
7. Increase the use of consortia courses

The Goals and Objectives above, taken together, present a picture of what we expect to find different about Lasell University in the fall of 2026 from what exists today.

Appendix A

Speed of Change Steering Committee Summary Report

Overview

In October of 2020, President Michael Alexander delivered a call to the Lasell University community to immediately commence the process of re-envisioning the future of the institution. With the onset of the global pandemic, the need for Lasell University to stand out in an increasingly competitive higher education market, for a shrinking pool of high school graduates, who are concerned about the cost of attending college, student loan burdens, and career readiness was amplified. The University's current Strategic Plan, *Vision 2022*, had begun to address our need to evolve and adapt to external conditions to deliver on our promise of a high-quality educational experience at an affordable cost. However, given the changing local and global circumstances, our need to revise, re-imagine and accelerate the timeline to implement meaningful institutional changes was more urgent than ever. President Alexander, stated in his call to the community that "While the reality we face is unsettling, it is also clarifying. It's not a matter of *if* Lasell will change, it's a matter of *how*."

A two-stage planning process to re-envision the institution immediately began. Stage I, which is reported on in this document, was focused on achieving *immediate* changes that could be implemented before Fall semester 2021. Specifically, the community was tasked with identifying ways to: a) enhance the student experience and provide opportunities to increase enrollments in a highly competitive, declining market for traditional age undergraduates and b) to identify actions that would significantly lower the University's cost structure while remaining consistent to our mission. Stage II will begin later in the spring semester and will develop longer-term goals, focused on more fundamental and comprehensive changes.

Stage I Summary of Activities

All faculty and staff from across the institution were invited to volunteer, creating a "think tank" of great minds with a variety of experiences and perspectives from all departments on campus. Twelve Idea Creation Groups (ICG's) were formed from the 87 volunteers. The groups were cross-divisional and were assigned in such a way to elicit creativity through diverse perspectives and insights from group members. Additionally, the Academic Leadership Group, composed of the Deans and Associate Deans, formed a group and the President also compiled his own list of ideas. All of the groups were given the same assignment, as described below.

- Identify three to five actions that would enhance the student experience, and provide opportunities to increase enrollments in a highly competitive, declining market for traditional age undergraduates

- Identify three to five actions that would significantly lower the University’s cost structure while remaining consistent to our mission
- Agree upon a central theme or focus that distinguishes Lasell from its competition and serves as an effective selling proposition
- Be creative

Additionally, several underlying assumptions were set forth to serve as foundational elements for the ideation process. These included that Lasell will:

- Remain a highly residential institution for undergraduates that offers a variety of learning subject areas, opportunities, and delivery methods
- Continue to invest in programs for adults to maintain or increase rate of enrollment growth
- Continue to explore ways to provide a high-quality private higher education at a lower cost (lower out-of-pocket costs or lower cumulative loans)
- Continue the commitment to infuse career development and intercultural competence throughout the curriculum

Each ICG was tasked with developing a final report that reflected their group’s process and prioritized ideas for implementation.

A Steering Committee was formed by the President and Senior Management Team that was tasked with coordinating the ICG process and ultimately combining and prioritizing the ICG reports to be presented to the Lasell community in January 2021. Steering Committee members included Professor Marisa Hastie, Vice President Kate O’Connor, Vice President Chrystal Porter, and Provost Eric Turner.

The Steering Committee met several times in December and January and worked to identify common themes across the ICG reports. Focusing on being “mission driven and market smart,” the Steering Committee prioritized the top five enrollment and student experience enhancement ideas and the top five ideas to lower the University’s cost structure. There were many valuable recommendations generated by the work of the ICG’s.

Central Theme or Focus That Distinguishes Lasell from its Competition and Serves as an Effective Selling Proposition

While several themes emerged in the ICG’s recommendations, it was clear that *Career Readiness* was a focus that could serve to distinguish Lasell. Connected learning, industry recognized credentials, the infusion of more technology into the curriculum, multidisciplinary capstones, and greater emphasis on both the three-year degree and fifth year option are all central to *Career Readiness*. There was also a broader call for infusion of intercultural competency, mental health resiliency, and civic engagement throughout the four-year Lasell curriculum. Broadly speaking, it is easy to argue these, too, enhance the readiness of our graduates. Lasell is already known for career-focused programs and the ICG’s recommendations would further strengthen our market position.

ICG's suggested we "overhaul" and utilize FYS as a platform to introduce what we believe are hallmarks of a Lasell student experience and, ultimately, a graduate. Other courses in the Core Curriculum, such as the Individuals and Society requirement, are also opportunities for us to infuse these core beliefs. There is an opportunity to infuse this work into residential life in a more intentional way through collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. Some ICG's recommended finding new opportunities for collaboration with community partners and revenue generation through campus programming as well as existing entities. There may be ways in which these can contribute to the career readiness of our students also.

The top five priorities that can increase enrollment/enhance the student experience and lower the University's cost structure by Fall 2021 are:

1. Infuse industry-recognized credentials into all majors
2. Add more athletic teams
3. Create a mandatory fiscal responsibility, budgeting and procedural series for all employees
4. Plan the academic/course schedule one year at a time, cross list more courses and reduce under-enrolled courses
5. Increase the use of consortia courses

Below are more detailed descriptions of these priorities that have been identified for immediate implementation. Pursuant to the charge of the President, the Steering Committee was tasked with identifying the most immediately implementable and largest impact items. These are opportunities to improve our institution while simultaneously offering a cost savings. This is not to discount the many other imaginative ideas that look to a longer-term implementation and should certainly be carried over into the Stage II process in Spring semester 2021. Some of these are noted in the report below, but all suggestions are included in the ICG reports so that no valuable idea will be lost.

Priorities for Increasing Enrollment and Enhancing the Student Experience to be in place by Fall 2021

1. Infuse Industry-Recognized Credentials into All Majors

Several teams identified career readiness badges or certificates as opportunities to both improve our students' professional development, with the intent of enhancing our enrollment yield. More specifically, the call was for industry-recognized credentials to be adopted formally into the curriculum, either within a course or an independent professional development experience. The Steering Committee agrees with this recommendation and believes that this commitment would improve our undergraduate experience, enhance student career outcomes and future earnings, and would strengthen our institutional marketability. Under the assumption that students go to college to ultimately improve their career prospects and opportunities, promoting the institution as being intentionally invested in students' career preparedness could become a significant and distinguishing feature. Industry-recognized credentials are an extension of our connected learning philosophy, providing our students with additional experiential learning opportunities.

Several programs already have credentials embedded within courses. A list of these credentials will be compiled as soon as possible to be shared with the Admissions Team for immediate marketing. In order to identify additional credentialing opportunities, we recommend that the Deans of each school identify the appropriate credentialing for individual programs of study. This should begin immediately with the goal of plans or implementation by Fall 2021. It should be recognized that some credentials may require curriculum proposals and/or budgetary proposals which would require a more lengthy implementation plan.

One potential tool that can help to identify credentials needed in the field is Burning Glass Technology, which details the skills employers are seeking. In 2019, there were over 500,000 positions listed in Massachusetts that required a Bachelor's degree. Burning Glass enables the user to identify fields and skills needed for individual professions. Additionally, Kaplan has a program that partners with colleges and universities in providing credentials. Other opportunities may exist with professional organizations in the field.

2. Add More Athletic Teams

Adding more athletic teams was another recommendation that would further enhance our student experience and grow our enrollment. Research, including our anecdotal experience, shows that student athletes yield and retain at higher levels than other student groups. Acknowledging the limitations of our facilities, we believe the opportunity exists to add additional intercollegiate teams at the club level and develop some into National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division III opportunities. Keeping in mind current resources at Lasell, some possibilities include Rowing (one of Lasell's assets is the Boat House) and Golf (nearby courses mean practice facilities would not need to be on campus and student athletes bring their own equipment). A thorough review of opportunities and costs (including facility capacity and support staff) would need to be explored.

While on-campus recreational space may hamper expansion, a review of programs that might use off-campus facilities could prove worthwhile. It is important to recognize that any new programs need to take into consideration not just the addition of a coach and space for the competition, but also the infrastructure that accompanies any additional sports.

The Steering Committee recognizes that this recommendation cannot be fully implemented this fall. However, in order to have new teams in place as soon as possible, this effort must begin immediately. Identifying programs and possible spaces and hiring a coach to recruit student athletes should be in place by late spring in order to recruit for January and September 2022.

Other opportunities for both recruitment and retention exist within the athletics realm. The Steering Committee recommends an athletics proposal that encompasses these and other opportunities, associated costs and potential returns, and a timeline for implementation.

3. Infuse Technology to a Greater Degree in Curriculum

Several ICG's made suggestions regarding infusing more technology in the overall curriculum, including the Core Curriculum and within all majors. One example would be adding a course introducing students to technology that would include practical math, as well as possibly coding and other computer science concepts. Possible skill areas to consider bolstering include coding, data interpretation, additional quantitative reasoning and increasing practice with using Excel and continuing to reinforce concepts throughout the curriculum, both in the Core and in majors.

The Steering Committee recommends that the Math and Data Science Program Chair and Core Curriculum Committee collaborate with the Provost to identify opportunities to add technology courses. As a University, we need to determine what technology skills are needed for all graduates and what is required within each discreet major in order to determine the curriculum of this technology course. It is important to note that we will need to consider additional hires in order to successfully deliver this technology curriculum. Additionally, Academic Deans should collaborate with Program Chairs to identify ways and means for infusing technology into each degree path at Lasell.

The Steering Committee would like to note that one item that was key from the ICG reports was the goal to **Create, Revive and Effectively Market Three-Year Degree Options**. Effective Marketing of existing Three-Year degree programs can begin immediately. We recommend that the Marketing and Communications Department, the Admissions Team, and the Deans (in collaboration with the Program Chairs) work to effectively market existing Three-Year degree programs immediately. In the longer term, it is recommended that we identify new opportunities for Three-Year programs or revitalize some that may be moribund. Given the cost of a bachelor's degree as well as many students' increased desire to enter the workforce as soon as possible, there is greater demand for more rapid alternatives to the traditional four-year (or four-plus-year) path to degree completion. Each School/Program should develop formal three-year options/education plans for all majors (utilizing summer courses at Lasell and courses offered by Acadeum, RIZE and other consortia) that can be easily marketed to high school students considering Lasell. These should be actively marketed by the Admissions Office (and Marketing Communication). The Senior Management Team should review and consider whether discounting this option is effective in increasing revenue and enrollment. The Graduate and Professional Studies division should work with appropriate undergraduate units to create as many 3 +1 options as possible which should also be actively marketed by the Admissions Office.

Note that several ICG groups recommended stronger marketing of Lasell's Fifth Year Option. The Steering Committee agrees with these recommendations. Because efforts are currently underway to do this, it is not included as one of the final recommendations. However, the Steering Committee agrees that this should continue, and that Admissions and GPS consider offering "acceptance" to the Fifth Year Option at the time undergraduate candidates are admitted to the University.

Additional items that will require more time for implementation and development, but that the Steering Committee felt were important to highlight are briefly described below.

For implementation by Summer 2022 (plans to be proposed by Fall 2021):

1. Expand Summer Programming

Unlike traditional summer school courses, Lasell's summer programming would be designed for students who struggled during the traditional academic year or are interested in reinforcing subject area knowledge, all while earning transferrable elective credit. The primary target audiences would be: (1) traditional high school students; and (2) gap-year, or would-be college freshmen.

The goal would be to develop and market a variety of customized academic activities and experiences, tied into programming, that would allow students the opportunity to gain new skills, try-out a new interest, and/or reinforce learning in a specific subject area (eg. Fashion, STEAM, or DEI). Lasell's programming would be classified as "enrichment experiences" that give students the opportunity to explore "subjects" while earning transferable elective college credit. Additionally, Lasell could offer participants who complete any program incentives to: (1) apply to Lasell for future full-time enrollment, and/or (2) take individual classes in upcoming summer and winter terms.

Additionally, we believe these should be considered in the Phase II work set to begin in Spring 2021 as we develop our future Strategic Plan:

2. Expand Undergraduate Degree Programs

Graduate and Professional Studies (GPS) is currently involved with expanding undergraduate online options for students who are interested in completing their degrees in a rigorous, but flexible mobile-friendly environment. As of Fall 2020, the Bachelor in Business Administration was introduced, incorporating accelerated 7-week courses. There currently is the plan to offer additional bachelor's degrees in Criminal Justice and Communication. Curriculums are being drafted, with the target date of going to market, by Summer 2021.

In addition to the introduction of new program offerings and degrees, as of January 2021, considerable attention is going into promoting our credit-bearing certificates, that have recently become eligible for students to complete with the assistance of financial aid. As well, Professional Studies has re-envisioned its focus to include courses that are specific to professional and skill development.

- **Infuse the broad themes of career readiness, intercultural competency, mental health resiliency, and civic engagement throughout the four-year Lasell curriculum.**

It is suggested that we "overhaul" and utilize FYS as a platform to introduce what we believe are hallmarks of a Lasell student experience and, ultimately, a graduate. There is an opportunity to infuse this work into residential life in a more intentional way through collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic affairs.

- **Consider opening *Lasell Works* to the whole community, perhaps as a broader co-op experience for all.**

Internship experiences are now a standard requirement at most higher education institutions and is no longer necessarily a distinguishing element for Lasell. However, we may want to consider taking our signature *Lasell Works* program and examine how we could leverage the type of work experience inherent to that program and create an immersive experience for students in the latter years of their Lasell education.

Priorities for Lowering the University's Cost Structure

To be in place by Fall 2021:

1. Create a Mandatory Fiscal Responsibility, Budgeting and Procedural Series for all Employees.

Effective stewardship of the University's budget is the responsibility of all employees. In order to reduce our spending and maximize current resources, those who spend the University's funds need to understand the reasoning behind the budget. This will in turn enhance the student experience because we will be able to more efficiently utilize budgeted resources and better allocate funds to other areas to improve student resources. Led by the CFO, Business Office and Budget Advisory Committee, we suggest that the following be considered for immediate development and implementation: (1) design and implement ongoing fiscal responsibility and procedural workshop series; (2) design and implement best practices budget development and management trainings; and (3) offer regularly scheduled consultation opportunities for employees tasked with day-to-day operational management.

2. Plan Academic/Course Schedule One Year at a Time, Cross List More Courses and Reduce Under-Enrolled Courses.

By planning the academic schedule annually, the University can better plan to run courses in more efficient ways. Deans and Program Chairs can better plan staffing and adjunct hiring. They and the Registrar can better plan course rotations resulting in higher enrolled sections.

Cross listing courses is a way to increase enrollments in sections by reaching students in other disciplines who might not otherwise know about or consider taking classes actually related to their interests. Cross listing has proven successful in a number of instances and should be employed more often.

Course sharing through consortia (described below) can increase the number of students per section both by enrolling Lasell students in otherwise under-enrolled courses in classes at other institutions instead. Likewise, Lasell can fill its own sections by offering courses to students from other institutions in these consortia. Moving to a single course for the Individuals and Society Knowledge Perspective (see below) will result in more full sections as students satisfy this core requirement.

Lasell currently offers over 60 majors and minors, many of which have small numbers of students enrolled. In today's higher education environment, it is critical that Lasell's programs be compatible with the University's mission, so they align with our strengths and are market driven in order for us to be competitive. Tools, such as Burning Glass, should be used to assist in identifying realistic demand for graduates in most disciplines. This should be done by the School Deans and Program Chairs in collaboration with the Provost and Enrollment Management.

Given the amount of time, effort and inputs required to review existing majors and minors, reviewing majors and minors is a more appropriate task for Phase 2 of the strategic planning process. It should be noted that through the measures discussed above, there may be less need to eliminate majors and minors. Indeed, some of the above recommendations may serve to stabilize or even increase enrollment in some programs. The School Deans and Program Chairs, in collaboration with the Provost and Enrollment Management should identify ways these measures can best be utilized to adjust program components to strengthen demand.

Additional items that were of noted importance from the ICG reports that are already in progress and that the Steering Committee would like to note of importance to continue include:

3. Increase use of Consortia Courses

The University is already expanding its use of courses offered by RIZE and Acadeum. In addition, several other previously existing partnerships yield course options for students of Lasell, such as our partnerships with Lesley University in languages, Regis College in Psychology and health professions courses and community colleges in the Commonwealth, to name a few. Lasell recently received approval for four new bachelor degree programs utilizing RIZE and Lasell courses; marketing of these has just begun. The University is considering other potential degree programs with RIZE. Lasell also is increasing use of courses taught by Acadeum member institutions to maintain student progress toward degree completion, expand the range of courses we offer and to meet other academic needs. (Lasell also offers courses in the RIZE and Acadeum consortia, enrolling students from other member institutions.) Continued and increased use of RIZE and Acadeum, in particular, can minimize under enrolled sections and increase enrollment in others.

Already in progress is an effort to replace the use of multiple courses for the Individuals and Society Knowledge Perspective course with a single course. Student feedback on this requirement consistently indicates a desire for more content on issues of inequality (gender, race, etc.). There is an opportunity to equip students early in their Lasell career with a common fundamental learning experience about diversity, equity and inclusion on which higher level courses can utilize and build in subsequent years. The third-year Ethics course is a good model for how this could be effectuated. Some discussion is already taking place regarding possible objectives and outcomes as well as how such a course might look. The Steering Committee recommends that the Associate Deans of Curriculum Integration continue the work of developing this single course in collaboration with the Core Curriculum Steering Committee, the Chief Diversity Officer, the Provost, and the Academic Deans.

While not immediately able to be implemented, the Steering Committee would also like to note that some potentially impactful longer-term projects that could increase efficiencies include:

- Transitioning all forms to online digital forms
- Redesigning the class-scheduling grid
- Creating multidisciplinary capstones
- Conducting a serious review of: (a) the academic calendar (term length and variety); (b) credit or course structure (four credits per course; or just a set number of courses required, such as 32 to graduate); and (c) definitions of faculty load (to make loads more equitable and increase efficiencies)

With the charge to identify ways in which to lower the University's cost structure, several viable revenue generating ideas emerged from the reports that are worth mention and investigation. While these cannot be implemented prior to the start of the Fall 2021 semester, they do hold potential for contributing positively to the University's revenue.

- Identify potential revenue producing, connected learning opportunities such as expanding Studio 1851, creating other student-run retail outlets, reclaiming the Lasell bookstore, establishing a campus pub, start Lasell Student Agencies (in same vein as Harvard Student Agencies), repurpose residence hall(s). We should promote these through a Connected Learning media blitz
- Establish underwriting partnerships with local businesses and the TV studio or Radio station. We should consider a weekly show that highlights content related to a particular field and allow Lasell students to produce it for an affiliated community partner or business
- Create offerings for high school graduates not yet enrolled in college, such as 7-week, for-credit courses designed to introduce students to college. These courses could be scheduled later in the semester, in order to enroll existing Lasell students who have gotten off to a poor start in a semester course and need to start over

Appendix B

Report of Town Hall Meeting Discussions February – April 2021

In preparation for a three-day strategic planning meeting at the end of April 2021 with a cross-section of members of the Lasell community to determine fundamental and significant goals for the University for the next several years, President Michael Alexander led a series of five virtual meetings over the last three months with groups representing various constituencies of the University.

During the first four meetings, we participated in a **Brainstorming** process followed by a period during which participants were able to **Advocate** for the items that they thought had the highest benefit to the University for the amount of cost or pain it would take to achieve them. Where time allowed, we then voted to establish a shorter list of items of highest **Priority**.

In the fifth meeting, to which the whole Lasell community was invited, we reviewed the list of ideas generated in the first four meeting and during Stage I of the strategic planning process (completed in January 2021). After a period of Advocacy, the participants voted to determine items of highest Priority.

In determining priorities among many good concepts, President Alexander asked participants to take into account the relative **Costs and Benefits** of each concept, i.e.:

- How many units of benefit do we receive for each unit of cost?
- Cost means not just money, but also expenditures of time, energy, pain, opportunities lost, and difficulty of execution

At the end of each meeting, we finished with the understanding that the results of the meeting would provide input to the strategic planning process leading up to the culminating three-day meeting taking place on April 26, 27 and 30, 2021.

Below are summary reports of each of the five meetings.

February 23, 2021 – Management Council

President Alexander led a Zoom meeting with 33 employees who comprised the University's Management Council, a group of employees from across the campus, to identify mid- to long-term goals that, once achieved, could strengthen the University and contribute to the quality of the student experience. A good number of attendees had the opportunity to advocate for a goal they thought would be most beneficial. The notes below summarize the content of the discussion and will be included with materials for a

culminating three-day strategic planning meeting involving members from across the Lasell community.

- Look at serving an age-diverse student population
- Develop reliable corporate partners for GPS and the Schools, or to provide professional certificates
- Enhance UG experience to support students' emotional challenges
- Identify upcoming occupations in high demand and create niche academics to attract specific group(s)
- Rethink academic credit or non-academic credit experiences
- Add/expand summer course offerings, including on-campus courses
- Open up counseling services and AAC services in the summer
- Add traditional-age UG online degree programs
- Intensive programs for high school students over the summer
- Offer foundational skills assessment and training prior to the first year
- Expand partnerships with external parties who use campus over the summer
- Review residential facilities and develop strategic plan for these properties for the future
- Develop partnership with English language program to attract more international students
- Student exchange partnership with another higher education institution in another part of country
- Identify a degree program in which students interact with the senior population, e.g. physical therapy
- Expand and enhance accessibility support services for students and accessibility across campus
- Make extra-curricular engagement a requirement for graduation
- Consider changing from three-credit to four-credit system
- Rethink credits vs alternative manners of assessing student skills
- Summer bridge program for first gen or low-income students to get a jump-start before the start of the semester
- Offer degree apprenticeships
- Offer a guaranteed job program
- First two years of all programs have all-online offerings with option to live on campus for the last two years
- Utilize and invest in immersive technologies
- Double the endowment

March 18, 2021 – Faculty

President Alexander led a Zoom meeting with 61 faculty members to discuss how the University should evolve in light of changes in the external environment, the experiences of faculty and students during the pandemic, and the evolving learning needs of the students. The notes below summarize the content of the discussion and will be included with materials for a culminating three-day strategic planning meeting involving members from across the Lasell community.

- New meeting technology puts Lasell in a good position to allow more flexible scheduling to our employees which may attract a more diverse employee pool
 - Could indirectly lead to recruiting a more diverse student population and provide a more inclusive and comfortable setting for current student body
- Listen to the students from their experiences during the pandemic to understand what did, and did not, work for them in terms of technology and online learning:
 - Structure classes differently and provide materials in advance of classes
 - Provides more options and greater access for students
 - Enables students to coordinate their schedules better
 - Online learning reduces travel, and wasted time
 - Pre-recorded lessons were useful and had great reach with students studying remotely
 - Use new technologies to enhance the online learning experience
- New meeting technology and asynchronous nature of teaching and learning, also allows for more flexible paths to degree completion for students, with a mixture of online and on-campus learning
 - Could allow Lasell to reach broader age-range of students and work towards putting more Age-Friendly University principles into practice
 - Online discussions draw out the quieter students and can engender lively conversations that include respectful disagreements and personal experiences
- Use technology to form more intentional connections with high schools
 - Increase Lasell student and faculty presence in high schools and linkage to guidance counselors and through broader student mentoring programs and outreach, not just necessarily course delivery
 - Lasell students could share their internship experiences with high schools which could prove a major draw
 - Make *Connected Learning Symposium Showcase* days open to the public and advertise accordingly
 - (*Syracuse University*) *Project Advance (SUPA)* allows high school students to take college classes to earn early and transferrable credits
- Not all students learn the same way and some struggle with new technologies. Need to be able to support all students and try to get them all at the same starting line at the beginning of their higher education career:
 - Use FYS and/or orientation to address some of the basic issues and gaps for incoming students in use of technology. Learn about: the resources available to them; the fundamentals of Canvas, Starfish, Zoom. Etc.
 - May need to identify another space to provide extra support so as not to overload FYS or orientation
 - Brainstorm a list of resources that incoming students need and then programs can discuss how they can address them in specific ways
 - May make sense to have pre-requisite material due before classes begin
 - Could make pre-recorded lessons and have assignments due before first class, nothing too rigid but enough to get the pre-req process started
 - Use 'Student Success Network' page as a resource to quickly point students in the right direction for resources to learn about new services, tools and systems
 - Review our classroom instructional strategies and coordinate them so that students are learning the needed skills within the structure of our coursework

- Sometimes the issues lie with the systems rather than the students; e.g., reorganize website to make it easier to navigate; and standardize user experience in Canvas in terms of how courses are built.
- More automated systems for administrative functions
- Turn assessment efforts more and more towards gauging how the students are developing along the Intercultural Knowledge and Effectiveness outcome (or NACE's Global/Intercultural Fluency competency) and, at the same time, revisit and evaluate assessment efforts to ensure they are equity-minded, and not reflective of the structurally biased approaches of the last century. Both of these assessment activities would continue to improve our community's efforts at DEI and help students to develop more effectiveness and knowledge when it comes to intercultural actions.
- Develop preventative and coordinated approaches at curriculum and living levels to help students from minority, international, and certain socio-economic backgrounds who may find it harder to adapt.
 - Continue assistance/support pieces such as those developed during the pandemic
 - Standardize reporting and consequences of incidents of bias
 - Target different student populations in culturally responsive ways to increase their engagement
- More intensive DEI training, as opposed to single session options
 - As an incentive, try to offer our own programs that could lead to a certificate which we could then offer to faculty and staff at other institutions through GPS
- Faculty can offer support to the work of the Counseling Center, through classroom interaction with students, but without taking on the role of therapist
- Small group focused on teaching practices that support our diverse student population
- Need to look closely at increasing age-diversity of student populations, e.g. those who defer their college education; leave early; need specializations; create pipelines to advanced certificates and degrees
- Change the scheduling grid to build in dedicated time for faculty/student interaction, e.g. common hour every day or offer more slots at different times of the day that will mesh with students' own varied availability
- As we innovate, change and improve, we need to keep the student/faculty relationship front and center. This is the antidote to the challenges we face and our biggest strength to leverage
 - Remote learning impacts the community feel at Lasell and weakens the faculty/student connection, e.g. students less inclined to remain behind after class via Zoom
- Move from five credits to four; students might have more bandwidth and energy for their classes
- Reduce number of classes for faculty from four to three
- Reduce class sizes to provide greater support to each student
- Regular part-time positions especially for specialized instructors such as executives in residence; clinician in residence
- More full-time advisors that offer support for administrative/non-field-related support to our students
- More first-year advisors
- More full-time faculty

- Rethink some of the structures to build more connections between faculty and students, such as faculty teaching FYS retaining students as advisees
- Scale down the management tier
- Fewer meetings
- A decline in enrollment could lead to a higher ratio of full-time to part-time faculty
- Make big investment in mental health and 1:1 services including AAC
- Increase endowment to \$100m

March 25, 2021 – Students

President Alexander led a Zoom meeting with 13 students to discuss changes that students thought would enhance the experience of future students, while providing the greatest benefit for the cost. Attendees advocated for a goal they thought would be most beneficial. The notes below summarize the content of the discussion and will be included with materials for a culminating three-day strategic planning meeting involving members from across the Lasell community.

- Add two staff members to the Donahue Institute
- Add two to three staff members to the Counseling Center
- Invest in an on-campus emotional support dog
- Additional dining location/facility on campus
- More water fountain locations on campus
- Establish internship slots across programs
- Establish a graduate program for Higher Education Administration
- Promotion of five-year grad programs options
- More variety in online course options
- More opportunities for on-campus activities for *Lasell Works* sophomores
- Greater information flow from the Senior Management Team to students, e.g. a monthly newsletter
- More DEI training available to students and faculty/staff, making it mandatory training for faculty/staff if possible
- Add a required technology course
- Expand Connected Learning, providing more real-world conversations with professionals in the field
- Finish the rebranding of the transition from college to university, e.g. updating signs on campus
- Increase advertising in predominantly minority and low-income communities and high schools
- Increased opportunities to discuss diversity issues as a community, e.g. more town hall meetings
- Online self-paced DEI training for students
- Restructure FYS to include the intercultural competency value

April 6, 2021 – Staff

President Alexander led a Zoom meeting with 88 staff employees, mostly staff members, to discuss how, given the experiences of the last year, life and work on campus and services to students should change in the future. There was significant discussion around several of the suggested ideas. The notes below summarize the content of the discussion and will be included with materials for a culminating three-day strategic planning meeting involving members from across the Lasell community.

- As previously floated by both the Scenario Planning Task Force and a Speed of Change Idea Creation Group (ICG), offer a gap year experience for high school students prior to going to college
- Improve the breadth and quality of fitness/wellness programs in the community, particularly for the student body, including fitness, nutrition, and physical, mental and spiritual health.
- Take a lifespan view towards health and well-being, not just the now; encourage students to think about habits of well-being that will endure when they are older
- Offer health and well-being programs to the Newton community
- Improve the effectiveness of how we communicate available services and resources to students. Use multiple modes of communication, which appears to be students' preference
- Update and relaunch the Lasell app
- Increase cross-divisional engagement opportunities for employees, similar to what happened in the ICG process
- Re-task the ICG's to look at another topic/theme
- Use Starfish success network more effectively for students
- Increase students' understanding of Starfish basics and how to navigate it more effectively
- Allow pet-friendly resident halls
- Have a better understanding of our external partners across Divisions and Schools, and leverage those relationships to create more opportunities, particularly in terms of cross-discipline initiatives and programming
- Increase our visibility with potential external partners so they have a better understand of what we can offer
- Establish a consistent structure for capturing ideas from across the University's divisions throughout the year, rather than rely on specific standalone and time-limited processes. Create a mechanism to feed ideas to relevant teams and departments.

April 13, 2021 – Lasell Community

On April 13, 2021, 110 participants from across Lasell's entire community attended a meeting with President Alexander to review and prioritize a list of 78 goals for how a post-pandemic Lasell could operate in order to meet the needs, and enhance the experience, of future students. These goals had been identified during meetings held earlier in the semester with faculty, staff and students. The President provided an overview of the goals and then invited participants to advocate for those that they thought should be a priority for the University. After a lively period of advocacy, there followed two rounds of voting which produced a list of 17 prioritized goals, as shown below. The

report from this meeting will be included with materials for a culminating three-day strategic planning meeting involving members from across the Lasell community

- Double the endowment
- Infuse curriculum with themes of career readiness, intercultural competency, mental health resiliency, and civic engagement
- Expand summer programming, including Lasell-sponsored programs
- Develop partnership with an ESL program to attract more international students to campus
- Add more first-year advisors
- Add two staff members to the Donahue Institute
- Improve breadth/quality of fitness/wellness programs (fitness, nutrition, physical/mental/spiritual health) for students and employees
- Offer a gap year experience for high school students prior to going to college
- Identify corporate partners for GPS and Schools
- Identify upcoming occupations in high demand and create academic offerings to attract specific groups
- Create offerings for high school students not yet enrolled in college
- Add a required technology course
- Offer a summer bridge program for first gen or low-income students
- Change to a four-credit course structure
- Make more DEI training available to students and employees
- Add two staff members to the Counseling Center
- Offer foundational skills assessments and training prior to the first year

Appendix C

- **Mission** – The Mission is simply what the University is today. What is it that we do?
- **Vision** – The Vision, on the other hand, is what we want the University to become at some designated point in the future. Knowing what we know about higher education, how do we think the University should look five from now? The Vision is a set of priorities that may be expressed in terms of academic and co-curricular programs offered, number of students and faculty, financial measures, or fundraising targets.
- **Values** – Values are those tenets we share as a community that guide us in our daily decision-making, that help us through the dilemmas we inevitably will face as teachers and managers, and that lay the ethical foundation for the University.
- **Positioning** – Positioning describes a unique place in the market or industry, unoccupied by a competitor. that a University can legitimately claim for its own. Not to be confused with Mission, Positioning is not a description of what a University does well. Rather, it asks what is it that the world needs or clamors for that is within the University’s power to provide. Establishing a position in the market is what leads to an identity for the University that is sharp and distinctive, easy for the public and the higher education community to understand.
- **Objectives** – Every University has many and varied objectives. We do not attempt to agree upon what all of Lasell’s ongoing objectives are. In our planning, we discuss and agree upon a small number of objectives that represent things we can do differently than what we do now, that when achieved over the next year will make a difference in moving the University forward. These Objectives must be concrete and measurable, so that by the end of the succeeding year, we can determine and report to the extent to which we achieved them.