



HOWARD PAYNE
UNIVERSITY

Strategic Plan

2023 – 2028

**ENHANCING
THE
STUDENT
EXPERIENCE**

INTRODUCTION

Since 1889, Howard Payne University has prepared students for intellectual inquiry, personal and professional integrity and service to God and humanity. Over the next five years, Howard Payne University will focus effort and resources on *Enhancing the Student Experience* across locations in Brownwood, New Braunfels and El Paso. This endeavor will maintain and further strengthen HPU's commitment to students in providing a Christ-centered academic community dedicated to excellence by developing and equipping students with the critical thinking skills, integrity, and service mindset necessary for lives that glorify God.

Through a two-year process of praying and planning, four main themes, referred to in the plan as **University Priorities**, emerged as areas of concentration over the next five years:

- Engaging and enriching interactions
- Enrollment growth and student support
- Innovative teaching and learning
- Transformed spaces

These university priorities align with the mission, core values, and vision of Howard Payne University. Each emphasis will center on the **student experience**, positioning the University to offer the best for students to succeed both inside and outside of the classroom and in their professional callings.

In discussion of each **priority**, several **strategic goals** will be outlined, each with measurable actions. The selected priorities, goals, and actions direct the University on a course to **enhance the student experience**.

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Howard Payne University is committed to developing students to understand what the words of Ephesians 2:10 mean to them. Students must recognize that they are God's workmanship, created in Him to do good works, which He has prepared in advance for them to do. **The student experience** will be one that shapes their academic pursuits, nurtured in a community of relationships and in a supportive environment. The goal of the student experience is to help students discern their callings and to prepare them academically, spiritually, and vocationally as confident leaders ready to make a Kingdom impact. We believe strongly that the world today needs the kind of college graduates that HPU produces.

A UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION BUILT ON THE ROCK

Howard Payne University is an institution grounded in her beliefs and built on the rock of Christ's teachings (Matthew 7:24-27). Our commitment is for the mission, core values, and vision of the university to shape every aspect of who we are and what is most important to us as an organization.

Our Mission – Howard Payne University is a Christ-centered academic community dedicated to excellence by developing and equipping the whole person for intellectual inquiry, personal and professional integrity, and service to God and humanity.

Our Vision – As we pursue the Strategic Plan 2023-2028, our vision for the University is to excel as a Christian, academic, student-centered institution that is highly impactful for our students in their educational journey while supporting them in their preparation for their future goals.

Our Core Values – In earnest pursuit of the vision above, we believe and affirm that the University as an institution and each individual called to serve the Lord at Howard Payne should strive to demonstrate a commitment to the following Core Values.

- **Centered on Christ** (cf. Col. 3:17; Matt. 7:24)
- **Focused on community** (cf. Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 3:8)
- **Called to service** (cf. Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:3-5)
- **Committed to excellence** (cf. Gen. 1:31; 1 Cor. 9:24)
- **Dedicated to stewardship** (cf. Gen. 2:15; 1 Pet. 4:10)

BUILDING ON THE ROCK TO IMPROVE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

From 2019-2022, the campus has been a whirlwind of positive improvement and growth.

Nearly \$2.3 million in campus improvements have updated residence halls and apartments, created community spaces for students to gather, renovated classrooms, and upgraded athletic facilities. During the 2022-2023 academic year, an additional \$5 million in projects will continue athletic upgrades, improve living and dining spaces, and complete the Douglas MacArthur Academy of Freedom renovation. While we agree that much more needs to be done, these investments are exciting for the campus community and a good beginning for what is to come.

In 2022, the University opened a new \$4 million front door for prospective students and visitors, The Newbury Family Welcome Center. This state-of-the-art facility includes several spaces to not only welcome new families to HPU, but also host meetings and gatherings for both on- and off-campus groups.

The financial health of HPU received a boost from several key financial decisions that have resulted in the University finishing in the black for three straight years. In addition, the fundraising of the

University has enjoyed three years of significant increase in giving with 2021-2022 setting a record for gifts received. Since 2019, the endowment has grown from \$65 million to over \$75 million. The turnaround in the financial health of HPU has been so stark that *Forbes* magazine awarded the University a grade of A-, making HPU the first-ranked private university in Texas ahead of schools like Rice and SMU. In addition, HPU's financial health has afforded a 6% raise across the board for employees over the last two years.

During this period, the emphasis has been to improve the student experience. As part of this effort, the student life area received many changes including the vice president's title from vice president of student life to vice president of student experience. In addition, a new position titled director of professional development and experiential learning was added. Furthermore, a \$200,000 grant was secured to inaugurate the annual William B. Dean, M.D. Lecture Series and Community Impact Day, during which students, faculty and staff spread throughout Brown County in service projects.

On that note, HPU has adopted the mindset that "what is good for HPU is good for Brownwood and vice versa." An emphasis on building strong community relationships has been a priority. In fall 2019, the University began hosting an annual Community Leadership Lunch and Learn for community business and organizational leaders to attend a seminar on leadership development.

The University has enjoyed growth in the School of Nursing, graduating their first class of nurses in May 2021. Several businesses, healthcare organizations, and foundations have partnered with the School of Nursing to provide over \$350,000 in scholarships and equipment. HPU recently launched a new software engineering program that has already involved students in securing patents for new inventions. The University also continues to regularly bring home top honors in academic competitions in Speech and Debate, Moot Court, and Model United Nations.

In enrollment efforts, Howard Payne secured guaranteed acceptance agreements with all seven Brown County ISDs, developed a scholarship for dual credit students called the Head Start Scholarship, created a church-matching scholarship, and initiated an aggressive campaign to recruit sophomores in addition to juniors and seniors in high school. With retention, a committee was appointed that resulted in new initiatives, including a commitment to campus-wide utilization of Connections, a software that alerts retention officers of students in need of assistance academically or personally.

In athletics, student-athletes continue to excel in the classroom with many being recognized for earning a GPA of 3.0 or higher. The athletic department signed a five-year rolling contract with Nike and Jordan, powered by BSN, which is a strong recruiting draw to HPU for students. The Yellow Jacket football team enjoyed a 7-3 season, their best record since 2005. Furthermore, the athletic program welcomed three alumni of the University as head coaches.

These accomplishments underscore the solid foundation upon which HPU stands strong. They also foreshadow what has become somewhat of a motto: "HPU's best days are ahead." These "best days" are what HPU strives to achieve through the development of this new strategic plan.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Beginnings – Dr. Cory Hines, university president, announced the strategic planning committee in spring 2021.

Prayer – The committee first met for three months of prayer through spring and summer where they prayed together for each university employee and department on campus.

S.O.A.R. – Following a review of previous HPU strategic plans, the committee conducted a S.O.A.R. (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) exercise as a committee and with faculty and staff in fall 2021.

Survey and analysis – Based on the S.O.A.R. results, a web-based survey was distributed for feedback. Over 660 responses were aggregated into an interactive dashboard giving the committee an opportunity to drill into the data to uncover themes and initiatives important to various groups of stakeholders (faculty, staff, alumni, students, community members, and university trustees).

Listening sessions – During summer 2022, listening sessions were held to receive feedback on five priorities (later consolidated into four priorities) and subsequent initiatives that emerged from the survey and analysis.

Refining – In the late summer and early fall of 2022, the committee reviewed and refined the priorities and initiatives, while including measurable actions offered by stakeholders during listening sessions.

Finalizing – In fall 2022, the committee wrote and edited a rough draft of the strategic plan for presentation to the University trustees at the October board meeting. A final copy of the *Strategic Plan 2023-2028* was completed in November- December 2022.

Implementation – An implementation committee was selected and commissioned for carrying out the *Strategic Plan 2023-2028* over the next five years, beginning in January 2023.

UNIVERSITY PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS

I. Enhancing the Student Experience Through Engaging and Enriching Interactions

Strategic Goal 1: Implement comprehensive job shadowing, mentoring, and internship programs to include alumni and local community friends by:

- developing a mentoring program for freshman-seniors involving faculty, staff, and students and then spotlighting these efforts;
- creating a vocational development system utilizing technology for facilitating internships and post-graduate job opportunities; and
- sharing alumni stories of career pathways and positive impacts on their communities.

Strategic Goal 2: Increase support and campus connection from alumni and friends by:

- working through the Office of Alumni Relations to create one alumni affinity group by major or by interest per year; and
- creating a communication outlet for all HPU constituents to hear regularly the story of HPU, to learn about campus activities, to know about current student achievements, and to find ways to be involved on campus.

Strategic Goal 3: Create programs for discipleship and spiritual growth, for intentional leadership development, for celebrating and supporting a multicultural student body, and for developing impactful relationships among students and the employees of HPU by:

- appointing a multicultural task force to support students and to create programming that educates and includes cultural awareness;
- appointing a task force to explore both a domestic and international study program;
- developing a student advisory council for input into discipleship and leadership programs as well as programs designed to increase relationship building among the HPU family; and
- promoting a campus-wide communication channel – a go-to resource for faculty, staff, and students – to learn about news, activities, competitions, performances, academic deadlines, etc., to improve campus involvement and professionalism.

II. Enhancing the Student Experience Through Enrollment Growth and Student Support

Strategic Goal 1: Create a campus culture of all personnel as new student recruiters by:

- enhancing relationships between Office of Admissions and faculty for targeted program recruiting events and contact with prospective students;
- developing enrollment pipelines with alumni and friends in churches, with high school counselors, and with local educators;
- connecting prospective students with current students at recruiting events;
- emphasizing the value of Christ-centered education at HPU;
- developing enrollment goals by program along with a readily available tool for up-to-date status on recruiting numbers; and
- increasing scholarships for new students so all academic departments have at least one scholarship for prospective students.

Strategic Goal 2: Create a campus culture that re-recruits current students by:

- developing a culture of student-centered support with all campus offices by reviewing processes and systems from a student perspective and making changes for greater efficiency and service to students;
- increasing scholarships for returning students;
- developing a student advisory council to advise faculty and staff on retention-related matters;
- creating an exit interview process for students who leave the University prior to graduation and sharing results with faculty and staff; and
- providing more counseling opportunities for students.

III. Enhancing the Student Experience Through Innovative Teaching and Learning

Strategic Goal 1: Develop new and innovative academic programs with growth potential by:

- appointing a task force of faculty across disciplines to research market trends and to consider new academic programs; and
- appointing a task force to explore the growth of strategic online programs to meet student needs and reach students unable to attend classes on campus.

Strategic Goal 2: Evaluate and improve academic programs by:

- developing a core of general education that creates a “spine” of academic support;
- conducting a holistic review of each school and program as well as the organization of schools and departments through the Office of Academic Affairs;
- engaging students in academic research and applied research as appropriate to their fields of study; and
- enlisting faculty with strong academic credentials who fit the mission of HPU and who desire to make meaningful connections with students.

Strategic Goal 3: Create professional development opportunities for leadership and for training and equipping faculty with best practice in pedagogy by:

- establishing a center for teaching and learning excellence that emphasizes and supports the pedagogical development of faculty and innovative practice;
- standardizing a faculty evaluation process that is connected to the University mission and the Strategic Plan 2023-2028, along with training for evaluators; and
- providing funds for faculty to innovate in the classroom by seeking grants and by reallocating current resources.

IV. Enhancing the Student Experience Through Transformed Spaces

Strategic Goal 1: Create community spaces that serve the student experience and relationship building by:

- building outdoor community spaces to encourage gathering, including outdoor technology and charging stations and a revamped Jacket Golf course;
- modernizing and renovating student resident halls, expanding on-campus apartment opportunities, and creating tiered residence hall options;

- creating and improving student options for socialization and dining across campus and with community partners;
- creating campus pathways that match the flow of activity, focus foot traffic, and invite community participation; and
- beginning efforts to reorient campus buildings to face the center of campus, directing traffic flow to better facilitate a community focus.

Strategic Goal 2: Rearrange, redesign and renovate classrooms for best practice in pedagogy by:

- renovating science labs and addressing other program-specific needs; and
- continuing to redesign and update classroom spaces.

Strategic Goal 3: Modernize, update and build athletic facilities to support student success by:

- installing lights for all outdoor athletic facilities; and
- creating additional athletic competition venues and practice facilities on campus.

IMPLEMENTATION

The *Strategic Plan 2023-2028* was adopted by the Board of Trustees in October 2022. The plan will focus effort and allocation of the university's personnel, financial, and physical resources for 2023-2028.

An implementation committee was appointed to provide leadership and execution of the priorities, goals, and actions outlined in the strategic plan. The committee included faculty and staff with direct connections to each University priority as strategic leaders responsible for carrying out the stated goals and actions. A chair and co-chair of the committee were also appointed.

ASSESSMENT

Beginning in 2023, each academic program will show the connection of some portion of its student learning outcomes to the strategic plan, and each administrative unit of the university will show the connection of some portion of its operational or service goals to the strategic plan. Job descriptions of all employees will be connected to the strategic plan and a component of yearly personnel evaluations will address the individual's efforts to advance the university's strategic plan.

In August each year, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs in collaboration with the implementation committee will present an annual report on the progress of the strategic plan to the president, to the administrative council, and to HPU employees.

A report on the progress of the *Strategic Plan 2023-2028* will be given to the Board of Trustees at its annual fall meeting.