

**Viterbo University  
Strategic Plan 2015-2020  
Values and Value**

*Approved in Principle 1/26/15*

**INTRODUCTION**

“Viterbo University Strategic Plan Update 2011-2015, University of Opportunity: Hope and Help” was approved by the Board of Trustees on May 21, 2011. As the current plan approaches its fulfillment, the administration proposed and the Board of Trustees approved a timeline that results in a refreshed strategic plan to be presented and approved in principle by the Board of Trustees at its meeting on January 26, 2015.

**WHO ARE WE?**

Identity Statement

*Founded and sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Viterbo is a Catholic, Franciscan University in the liberal arts tradition.*

**WHAT’S OUR PURPOSE?**

Mission Statement

*The Viterbo University community prepares students for faithful service and ethical leadership.*

**WHAT DO WE VALUE?**

Core Values

*In keeping with the tradition of our Franciscan founders, we hold the following core values:*

**Contemplation**, as we reflect upon the presence of God in our lives and work

**Hospitality**, as we welcome everyone we encounter as an honored guest

**Integrity**, as we strive for honesty in everything we say and do

**Stewardship**, as we practice responsible use of all resources in our trust

**Service**, as we work for the common good in the spirit of humility and joy

**VALUES AND VALUE**

The ethos that has dominated Viterbo University throughout its history is its foundation as a Catholic, Franciscan institution of higher education, especially its Franciscan heritage and values. Leading with this legacy, the university’s five core values serve as a guiding force for its organizational culture and behavior. Values inherent in the teaching

and learning process of a liberal arts institution have likewise molded the curriculum and the formative experiences of students. Moving forward, Viterbo will strengthen and advance its inherited Franciscan legacy and the core values that collectively distinguish the university from other Catholic institutions and from its secular competition. These values are deeply embedded into the fabric of Viterbo, giving life to the university's mission and purpose while appealing to those who seek the life-long and life-changing benefits of a Viterbo education. Yet, there are headwinds which must be navigated successfully to advance these efforts.

Specifically, the promotion of these values occurs during a time when the higher educational enterprise is the focus of national scrutiny and conversation. The measure of the value of a college education has gone beyond the presumed long-term value of a college degree to one of equations associated with usefulness, first year earnings, cost, and worth.

Nationwide demographic shifts, escalating tuition costs, growing student loan debt, and mounting employer, societal, and government expectations are leading to demands for more accountability. The quantitative value of a college degree has never been higher (for example, the lifetime earnings of a college graduate are reported to be \$1.3 million more than that of a high school graduate). Unfortunately, the long-term qualitative value of a liberal arts education (for example, lifetime satisfaction, community engagement, health, and longevity) has been deemphasized in this current debate.

Calls will continue for increased accountability and an emphasis on short-term measures of value, such as tuition prices, graduation rates, job placement rates, loan indebtedness, and starting salaries of graduates. Viterbo will respond accordingly, even as we reaffirm our commitment to emphasize the important life-long attributes, skills, and benefits to employers and society of students with a liberal arts foundation. In fact, in this current environment, Viterbo is well positioned in the competitive higher education marketplace, offering a strong value proposition to its full-time traditional undergraduate students, to its adult learners, and to its graduate students. Consequently, the key to the success of this strategic plan will be a two-fold emphasis on blending the strengths inherent in Viterbo's reputation for a values-based education and doing so within the context of value that is measured by metrics imposed by external sources.

The university addresses these realities and challenges in the 2015-2020 strategic plan with the confidence that fueled the success of the strategic plan that guided Viterbo from 2008 through 2014. These were not comfortable years for private and public higher education, yet Viterbo prospered and will continue to do so.

This strategic plan builds upon the strengths of Viterbo's Franciscan values, its signature academic programs, its dedicated employees, and its financial strength. This plan also recognizes the necessity to focus on increasing the value of the academic programs and the experiences found by its students and appreciated by its alumni. It recognizes the importance of community, both internal and external, and commits to enriching both.

## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

### Vision and Priorities

**Vision:** Leading with its strengths, the University will focus its energies and resources to achieve academic distinction in selected programs, to continue efforts to improve facilities, to strengthen and steward its financial resources, to grow undergraduate and graduate enrollments, and to ensure that each program and service strives for excellence and supports student success, all within the context of Viterbo's mission and Catholic, Franciscan identity.

The University will strive constantly to model servant leadership practices. Governing bodies at all levels will exemplify best practices in academic governance; decision making will emphasize collegiality, accountability, and transparency.

The University's leadership and initiatives will positively impact the city, county, and state through its focus on ethical leadership and management. Viterbo is an anchor institution within La Crosse, and is widely recognized as a valued partner and collaborator by leaders in the community. The quality of the campus neighborhood will be enriched, safer, and stronger.

By graduating more nurses with advanced skills and Christian compassion, the university will better serve health care providers and patients. By graduating more teachers committed to the full-potential and dignity of every child, and by providing advanced certifications and licensures for professional educators, the teaching and learning environments will improve in our schools. Business, industry, and not-for-profit organizations will thrive under the leadership of more graduates prepared to lead as servant leaders. By graduating more students in Viterbo's exceptional programs in the fine arts, sciences, business, and other disciplines, communities, employers, and families will benefit further from the presence of Viterbo alumni. In addition, more Viterbo undergraduates will be accepted into prestigious graduate programs, bringing with them a dedication to stewardship and responsibility in the practice of their disciplines.

Franciscan hospitality will be a hallmark of Viterbo's identity. We will strengthen the programs that support the mission of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and create unique learning and service opportunities that bring greater awareness to the Franciscan intellectual tradition. As the only Catholic university in the Diocese of La Crosse, Viterbo will extend its resources to serve better the diocese, its Catholic schools, Catholic health care, Catholic charities, and people of all faiths.

The University will make significant strides integrating academic and student life. The portfolio of Viterbo graduates will reflect students prepared for faithful service and ethical leadership in a diverse and global community. Innovative programs and services will add value to and enhance the Viterbo experience for all students by such means as

increasing global experiences, providing paid internships for students, and by supporting a robust undergraduate and graduate research agenda.

The University will provide ubiquitous access to information technology, accommodating mobile devices and many technology platforms. Classrooms, laboratories, and library spaces will invite conversation, teamwork, and the exchange of ideas and will be equipped with technology that best supports learning outcomes. Active learning strategies will be emphasized by faculty in all programs. Viterbo students, faculty, administrators, and staff are well prepared to utilize technology efficiently, effectively and ethically.

Measures of sound financial strength will be evident in all financial ratios. Balance sheets will continue to reflect solid yet conservative financial management. Protocols and financial principles guide allocations and investments as the university continues to be an outstanding steward of its financial resources. The human resources of the university are its most treasured assets; as such, compensation and benefits will be very competitive and enable the university to recruit and retain outstanding faculty, administrators, and staff.

### **HOW WILL WE KNOW IF WE GET THERE?**

By the year 2020:

- ◆ Viterbo University's programs continue to grow in distinctive and innovate ways. Programs in business, ethical leadership, the fine arts, in the humanities, human behavior, mathematics and the natural sciences, nursing and dietetics, servant leadership, and teacher education will have achieved academic distinction at national or regional levels. Viterbo's placement rates of graduates will be among the best in the region. While retaining its emphasis on the scholarship of teaching and learning, a graduate culture exists that supports scholarship and research, and provides innovative degrees and post-baccalaureate opportunities, delivered face to face, in hybrid formats, and totally online. The academic portfolio reflects a flexible approach and will respond to changing demographics, workforce needs, technology advancements, and innovative approaches to learning. Franciscan values, faithful service, and ethical leadership are pervasive in all Viterbo curricula, activities, and services. **[ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO PLAN]**
- ◆ The La Crosse campus is admired by all for its beauty, safety, and hospitality. The implementation of the campus master plan, approved in 2009, is well underway. All campus living facilities will have been renovated to better serve student needs. The Fine Arts Center continues to be the epicenter of performing arts in the region and boasts of improved spaces and amenities for patrons of all ages. Renovations to Murphy Center will make Viterbo's oldest classroom building more energy efficient and more accommodating to new teaching and learning strategies. New and improved athletic facilities accommodate increased varsity and intramural opportunities and offer excellent recreational opportunities for use by the community. A new student center will be constructed that will provide one-stop services for students, enhance the dining and retail environment, and provide necessary gathering spaces for a living and learning community. Property acquisitions will achieve 100% Viterbo ownership

of the campus perimeter and long range planning will be integrated with those of the FSPA and Mayo Clinic Health System Franciscan Healthcare. [**FACILITIES PLAN**]

- ◆ Viterbo’s total enrollment, including undergraduate and graduate, full and part-time, ground base and online, at multiple campus locations, is 3,500 students; the full-time undergraduate enrollment is 1,750. Affordability, access, and retention have improved for students from the region, especially first generation college students, veterans, and students of color. Through the establishment of endowed scholarships made possible by the generosity of trustees, alumni and friends, and through excellent financial stewardship, students and parents will find Viterbo offers an extremely attractive value proposition. [**ENROLLMENT PLAN**]
- ◆ A successful, comprehensive fund-raising campaign has demonstrated the confidence in the future of Viterbo University. Contributions and commitments to the endowment, through permanently restricted gifts, irrevocable and revocable estate commitments, and funds from operations total \$65 million during this period, strengthening the university for a promising future. [**CAMPAIGN PLAN**]
- ◆ Leaders from the philanthropic, business, health care, education, and civic sectors in the Seven Rivers Region recognize and appreciate the importance and value of the university to the viability of the region. Viterbo continues to be widely recognized for its exceptional personal attention to students, in helping them develop the talents, skills, values and attitudes to lead and to serve with faith, wisdom, and courage as they contribute to the betterment of humankind.

## **HOW WILL WE GET THERE?**

**Priorities:** The strategic plan focuses on four institutional priorities:

1. Assuring and Advancing Viterbo’s Franciscan Identity
2. Offering Distinctive and Innovative Programs
3. Supporting and Enhancing Student Experiences
4. Enriching and Engaging the Community

### **Institutional Priorities for 2015-2020**

#### **1. Assuring and Advancing Viterbo’s Franciscan Identity**

Viterbo’s deep and rich Franciscan legacy is significantly shaped and aligned with the history of its founders and sponsors, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. It is imperative Viterbo assures and advances its Viterbo Franciscan identity. For 125 years, Viterbo has been blessed with the dedicated presence of over 200 sisters who worked at the university and 500 FSPA who claim alumnae status. They serve as chroniclers and narrators of our Franciscan story, as mentors, faculty, trustees, friends and benefactors. They are visible stewards of Viterbo’s Franciscan identity and role models for the university’s core values.

Viterbo is entering a period of challenge and transition. Current and future lay members of the Viterbo community are called upon to assume even greater roles in assuring and advancing Viterbo's Catholic, Franciscan identity and heritage. The years 2015-2020 allow Viterbo to move resolutely in advancing its identity as Franciscan stewards of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By doing so, Viterbo commits itself to a vibrant Franciscan identity—one that is distinctive, one that is known and witnessed by students, employees, and guests.

**Strategic Initiatives for 2015-2020 include:**

- a. Integrate planning for the future with the plans and goals of the 2014-2018 FSPA leadership team, to include long range plans affecting the campus master plan, governance, and Franciscan heritage.
- b. Integrate planning for the future with the Friars as they undergo new governance models in the United States.
- c. Increase collaboration with Catholic organizations, such as the Franciscan Spirituality Center, Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities, Franciscan Services Network, Catholic schools in the diocese of La Crosse, and Catholic Charities, local and international.
- d. Create new opportunities for utilization of the newly renovated San Damiano Chapel and strengthen existing services/programs, such as the Mathy Center, St. Clare Health Mission, and Place of Grace that serve the neediest in the neighborhood and city.
- e. Incorporate Franciscan themes, interfaith dialogue, and Catholic Social teaching into professional development, campus ministry, and mission programs. Increase in-service and professional development opportunities (online, campus exchanges, conferences) to better understand, witness, and embody Franciscan values. Expand Assisi pilgrimage opportunities, real and virtual; accentuate Franciscan values in current and new rituals and traditions; schedule on-going orientation and re-orientation to mission programs.
- f. Develop more opportunities for members of the Viterbo and La Crosse community to study the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (FIT) and the Franciscan commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. Establish faculty development funds and opportunities beginning in 2016 for building faculty expertise in the FIT; increase offerings in the curriculum and through partnerships to increase student knowledge of the FIT. Educate the campus community on famous Franciscan scholars; integrate FIT and Franciscan values with Viterbo's established prominence in the study and implementation of servant leadership practices.
- g. Create and fund by 2017 a Franciscan Scholars or scholarship program for honor students, Master of Arts in Servant Leadership students, and other students pursuing religious studies or related majors as a means to grow their awareness and understanding of Franciscan identity and leadership.

## **2. Offering Distinctive and Innovative Academic Programs**

Research demonstrates academic reputation and academic programs are the most important reasons students of all types choose a college/university. Therefore, the university must focus its investment in academic programs that are distinctive, innovative, and of exceptional quality.

Today's students connect the cost and time to complete an academic program or certificate with the potential return on their investment. Consequently, a university's program must stand above its competitors, and contribute perceived and real value to the student. A cost and time conscious pool of students, traditional and non-traditional, requires savvy pricing strategies by institutions of higher education and a laser focus on eliminating barriers to access, affordability, and success.

Viterbo's niche should take advantage of its location, its size, its liberal arts integration into pre-professional and professional programs, and its outstanding reputation in such areas as education, ethics, the fine arts, nursing, and servant leadership. Because the demographic base of traditional age undergraduate students in the Midwest is declining, the academic portfolio of the future should be cognizant of national trends and the career interests of students' beyond its traditional recruitment areas. Viterbo needs to be attractive to students from a broader geographic and demographic reach. Viterbo's size enables it to be nimble in entering new markets and serving selected segments such as adult learners, veterans, commuter students, international students (particularly from China), and students from diverse backgrounds who are the largest pool of future students. Faculty and academic administrators must be encouraged and rewarded for innovative and entrepreneurial approaches in developing new programs and new delivery systems.

Employers consistently indicate they value a workforce that embraces critical thinking, flexibility, a strong work ethic, integrity, communication and teamwork skills, and global awareness. These attributes and skills are cultivated and sharpened in the curricular and co-curricular experiences at Viterbo and it is incumbent on the university to advocate in a more aggressive and public way the qualifications and success of its alumni.

Given these conditions, it is essential Viterbo's academic programs offer an exceptional advantage to students, enhance the university's reputation, attract and retain students, serve employers and the community, and be aligned with the institution's strengths, mission and values.

### **Strategic Initiatives for 2015-2020 include:**

- a. Expand academic programs that are well aligned with mission and strengths, that respond to changing demographics and students' interests, that offer linkages between undergraduate and graduate programs, and programs (degree, non-degree, certificates, professional development, corporate learning) that prepare students for promising career paths. A

needs assessment and market analysis will be conducted for five to six new or expanded academic programs by May 31, 2015.

- b. Innovate, expand, and strengthen partnerships for programs, services, internships and engagement opportunities, domestic and abroad, that add considerable value to the Viterbo experience.
- c. Build upon the current program review process and evaluate continuously Viterbo's academic programs according to criteria such as: mission critical, quality, credit hour generation, cost, community needs, job placement prospects, and potential for career advancement. A sunset plan and process for academic programs not meeting such criteria will be developed in consultation with the faculty and administration and implemented on an on-going basis.
- d. Assess the online programs launched in 2014, make continuous improvements, and prepare comprehensive evaluation of programs and report recommendations to the Board of Trustees no later than May 2017.

### **3. Supporting and Enhancing Student Experiences**

Supporting and enhancing the experiences of all students (traditional, adult learners, undergraduate, graduate) in a stimulating environment that promotes intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social growth are ways a university differentiates itself from other higher education institutions. Research indicates that actively engaging students in compelling programs increases the likelihood of student retention, student self-confidence, interest in post-graduate studies, and gainful employment. These factors lead to overall enrollment growth and the reputation of a living and learning environment that is welcoming, distinctive, and inviting for all to practice Viterbo's core values of hospitality, service, integrity, contemplation, and stewardship.

#### **Strategic Initiatives for 2015-2020 include:**

- a. Every Viterbo student will have an opportunity to value added experiences, funded by tuition, fees, and/or philanthropy. These experiences include active learning strategies in all courses, internships, intercollegiate athletics, service experiences, research, study/travel abroad, cultural immersion experiences, interaction with visiting scholars, artists in residence, and speakers, and attendance at conferences, seminars, and webinars.
- b. Provide paid internships (where specifically required for undergraduate program completion) for all students by September 1, 2016.
- c. Build a new student services center by 2020, focusing on hospitality for all prospective students and guests, emphasizing efficiency in a centralized and convenient location, improving the flow of enrollment services for all students (academic advising, admission, business office, financial aid, registrar).
- d. Develop a plan by December 2015 to increase enrollment of Hispanic students, the fastest growing population segment in the United States. Dimensions to the plan include national recruiting efforts (Midwest, West,



Southwest, and Florida), bilingual admission counselors and recruiters, selected bilingual webpages, scholarships, and bridge programs to prepare students for academic success.

- e. Initiate Viterbo's Pathways Project to achieve the university's goals for retention, adhering to timelines prescribed by the Higher Learning Commission and in preparation for the next 10-year accreditation review in 2018-2019. Implement retention strategies proven by national research and informed by longitudinal research of Viterbo students.

#### **4. Enriching and Engaging the Community**

Institutions of higher education have at least two distinct communities. The external community in which it exists, and to which it adds value, and the internal community with its unique culture that defines norms of behavior and ways of doing things. Since its founding, Viterbo has demonstrated its commitment to reaching out to and serving its external community. At the same time, a collegial culture has defined Viterbo's internal environment, though necessarily changed as the number of FSPA faculty and staff diminished, the number of off-campus programs grew, and lay faculty and staff, and adjuncts increased.

#### **Strategic Initiatives for 2015-2020 include:**

##### External Neighborhood Partnerships:

- a. Integrate city, neighborhood, and campus master plan to create safe and beautiful pathways from Viterbo's campus to downtown La Crosse.
- b. Collaborate with community agencies and update the needs assessment of the Washburn neighborhood by August 2016.
- c. Partner more closely with FSPA and Mayo Clinic Health System Franciscan Healthcare to coordinate campus master plans for footprint, property development, parking, and green space.
- d. Improve the Washburn neighborhood by encouraging owner occupied residences, employees living in the neighborhood, and by creating pocket gardens, greenways, and community improvement projects/service days.

##### Internal Community:

- a. Engage external professional expertise and conduct an employee satisfaction survey in 2014-2015 to assess employee satisfaction, work load, and quality of work life.
- b. Prepare compensation and benefits models and plans that address salary and wage deficiencies, respond to market forces, and lead to improved results in searches and retention of difficult to replace employees. Engage employee governance bodies in updating the listing of peer and aspirational institutions by June 30, 2015. Present recommendations to the

Compensation and Benefits Committee of the Board of Trustees in 2015-2016.

- c. Initiate campus-wide changes of policies, procedures, processes, and systems in order that twelve month continuous operational and academic calendars are in effect by August 2018 that exercise better stewardship of campus capacity and resources, as well as serve the needs of all types of students.
- d. Expand current professional development programs for faculty, administration, and staff that focus upon mission effectiveness, Franciscan values, and servant leadership.

### **Resource Plans**

The implementation of this strategic plan is the responsibility of the president and the executive leadership team. In the ensuing months, specific sub-plans will be developed by the administration and presented for review and approval by the respective standing committee of the Board of Trustees. As appropriate, the standing committee will present for review and approval various plans to the Board of Trustees. These sub-plans will be attached as appendices to the Strategic Plan as they are developed and approved. It will be the responsibility of the standing committee to monitor the implementation of the various plans.