



2019 - 2024

# Auburn University Strategic Plan

*Leading and Shaping the Future of Higher Education*



February 2019



# “OWING MUCH TO THE PAST, AUBURN’S GREATER DEBT IS EVER TO THE FUTURE.”

– Ralph B. Draughon  
Auburn University President (1947–65)

The statement from Dr. Draughon captures the essence of Auburn University’s five-year strategic plan — to fully embrace the future while keeping true to its traditions. Our new 2019 – 2024 strategic plan plots a bold course for Auburn University that not only leverages our strengths, but also honors our past.

As *The Auburn Creed* states, the Auburn Family believes “in a spirit that is not afraid.” We are not afraid of change; we will lead it. We are not afraid of the future; we will shape it. In fact, we began our strategic planning process by looking ahead 20 years. Through interviews and listening sessions hosted on-campus and across the country, we asked hundreds of our constituents—students, parents, alumni, donors, faculty, staff, Alabama citizens, legislators, and industry partners—for *their* vision of Auburn University 20 years from now, and the actions needed to realize that vision. Opinions varied, but everyone agreed that Auburn University has never been stronger, that our best days are ahead of us, and that intrepid action is needed to achieve our vision of greatness.

The components of the strategic plan include a mission, a vision, and goals that are woven together by strategic themes and institutional values. The mission defines our purpose. The vision describes our aspirations for Auburn University 20 years from now. The six goals describe our university’s most important priorities for the next five years that best position Auburn University to attain its vision. The seven themes describe important foundational elements that are integrated in the goals and are essential to Auburn University’s ability to accomplish its mission and achieve its vision. Finally, the university’s values are espoused in *The Auburn Creed*. These five elements—mission, vision, themes, goals, and values—comprise the framework for Auburn’s new strategic plan.

The strategic plan’s elements are forward-looking, integrated, mutually reinforcing, and written with intentionality. Every word has been carefully and deliberately chosen to make Auburn the best it can be. The strategic plan is an agreement among our constituents and a declaration to make Auburn University a truly great institution of higher education. Through this strategic plan, we hope to make good on that greater debt that Auburn University ever owes to the future.

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## MISSION

*As a land-grant institution, Auburn University is dedicated to improving the lives of the people of Alabama, the nation, and the world through forward-thinking education, life-enhancing research and scholarship, and selfless service.*

Auburn University's mission concisely describes our central purpose. Our mission statement begins with a reference to the university's origins and obligations as a public land-grant university. The 1862 *Morrill Act* created institutions of higher education that focused on agriculture and mechanical arts—a response to changing social and economic conditions. Land-grant universities would provide practical solutions to pressing societal problems and provide higher education to a much broader segment of American citizenry. Land-grant universities would eventually serve as the creators of economic opportunity and development. As such, we must never lose sight of the important educational, research and service responsibilities inherent in our land-grant lineage. Subsequent to its founding as a land-grant university, Auburn has also been designated, through federal legislation, as a sea-grant and space-grant university.

Our first responsibility is to **educate our students and prepare them for life**. We endeavor to expand their minds, broaden their experiences, and hone their capabilities by imparting both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Our goal is to empower and inspire our students to be their very best and to achieve their hopes and dreams. A key element of our public charter and of the *Auburn Creed* is to ensure our students are instilled with a strong work ethic, sound character traits, and core values of honesty and respect. We encourage students to make valuable contributions and to lead their fellow citizens in creating meaningful change. This responsibility to build moral character and inculcate active social responsibility distinguishes the student experience at all land-grant universities, and certainly at Auburn University.

Our second responsibility is to **drive the development of research and scholarship** that creates and advances knowledge. We support, build upon, and leverage the expertise of our faculty, students, and partners to discover, innovate, and create new science, new technologies, and new applications and methodologies that tangibly improve our world.

Our third responsibility, **engagement and outreach**, leverages the value of the first two elements. Our duty is to enable our students, graduates, faculty and partners to transform the fruits of our research and scholarship into products, methods, and services that meet our communities' most pressing needs. Delivering real-world, practical solutions is what sets land-grant universities apart and is core to Auburn University's foundation.

To be among the best land-grant universities, we must continue to excel in all three responsibilities. This requires leveraging the synergy found in the interchange of education, research, and service to maximize our impact on Alabama and the world.

## VISION

*To lead and shape the future of higher education.*

Our vision describes the aspiration for Auburn University 20 years in the future. It is deliberately intended to be lofty — realistic and ever challenging while also bold and ambitious. It is a challenge to ourselves to achieve greatness. Our vision is an invitation to the Auburn Family and those who do not yet know Auburn University to join us in our quest to inspire, innovate, and transform.

Auburn University has established itself as an excellent comprehensive, public land-grant university. However, excellence is not enough. We aspire to become a world-renowned institution that excels in education, research, and service—and to become a model of higher education. We understand that higher education is on the precipice of change. We intend to lead and shape that change.

Our goals describe Auburn University's highest priorities for the next five years. The accomplishment of these goals will best position our institution to achieve its 20-year vision.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

- ① **ELEVATED AUBURN EXPERIENCE**  
*Inspire and prepare students for life and careers* through delivery of an excellent and supportive experience characterized by distinctive, innovative curricula and engaging student life programs.
- ② **TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH**  
*Elevate research and scholarly impact* to address society's critical issues and promote economic development in Alabama and beyond.
- ③ **IMPACTFUL SERVICE**  
*Expand our land-grant and service capabilities* to foster greater innovation and engagement that enhances the quality of life and economic development in Alabama and beyond.
- ④ **EXCEPTIONAL AND ENGAGED FACULTY AND STAFF**  
*Invest in our outstanding people* to advance the university's mission through recruitment, development, support, recognition, rewards, and retention.
- ⑤ **STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT**  
*Achieve a robust and diverse enrollment of students* while enhancing access, affordability, and academic quality.
- ⑥ **OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE**  
*Implement operational efficiency and effectiveness measures* that continuously support a culture of high performance at all levels of the university.

## THEMES

Auburn University's strategic plan incorporates seven themes that apply to all of our goals. They address foundational elements that are essential to accomplishing our mission and achieving our vision.

### AUBURN SPIRIT

### ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

### INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

### PARTNERSHIPS

### TECHNOLOGY

### MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

### ACCOUNTABILITY AND MEASURABILITY

### AUBURN SPIRIT.

The last line of *The Auburn Creed* states "I believe in Auburn and I love it." This statement captures the *Auburn Spirit*. Auburn University is a special and welcoming place, offering opportunity and growth to those who choose it. To experience Auburn is to love it. That affinity for Auburn University is based on a belief in hard work; education; honesty; a sound mind, body, and spirit; obedience to law; the human touch; and patriotism. These beliefs are integral to the *Auburn Spirit*. An important aim of the strategic plan is to integrate these beliefs into the strategic plan to ensure that the university's values are transmitted far beyond campus and to future generations of Auburn University's students. A later section of the strategic plan provides *The Auburn Creed* and briefly describes its history and importance to the university.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE.

Auburn University's organizational culture is changing to better align with the university's strategic goals. Four areas of emphasis are:

#### COLLABORATION.

*Our internal focus is on collaboration, partnering, and networking, not on competition. Solving society's most complex problems requires reaching across or dissolving (sometimes artificial) intra-organizational boundaries.*

#### URGENCY AND NIMBLENESS.

*The pace of change in higher education continues to increase. To shape and lead this change, Auburn University is adopting a heightened sense of urgency and becoming nimbler. Leadership requires we act with deliberate speed and improve our ability to anticipate change and react quickly to the challenges and needs of higher education.*

#### BOLD ACTION.

*We encourage faculty, staff, administrators, students, and alumni to continually seek new and more innovative means to accomplish our mission and vision. We are positioning ourselves for new opportunities by venturing into new areas and working with new partners. Availing ourselves to engage in impactful new opportunities may involve taking measured risks.*

### FOCUS.

*Auburn will allocate resources to areas that best align with the achievement of our strategic goals and that most benefit our stakeholders.*

### INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY.

Auburn University seeks to better reflect the diversity in the world beyond our campus. Better decisions are made when alternative perspectives are heard. Accordingly, inclusion and diversity are essential to our success.

Diversity at Auburn University is broadly defined as encompassing the whole of human experience and includes such qualities as race, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, nationality, age, religion, sexual orientation, economic status, and veteran status. These and other socially and historically important attributes reflect the complexity of our increasingly diverse state and national population.

Inclusion is essential to achieving and maintaining diversity. Inclusion means creating a welcoming environment—for example, practicing mutual helpfulness and kindness, and ensuring all individuals feel valued—for all of our constituents, regardless of their specific human qualities. An accepting environment is essential to attracting and retaining outstanding and diverse students, staff, and faculty.

### PARTNERSHIPS.

Auburn University is becoming a premier practitioner of partner engagement. Maximizing our impact in instruction, research, and service is accomplished through deep and long-lasting partnerships that amplify and extend the positive societal change we seek. In all endeavors, we strive to be valuable partners and work closely with government, business, interest-based organizations, community colleges, high schools, vendors, and other universities. Our partnerships are characterized by a tight alignment of objectives and the ability to leverage our respective capabilities in order to maximize mutual benefits to Auburn and its partners.

### TECHNOLOGY.

Another amplifier of Auburn University's impact and reach is technology. Technology connects all activities at Auburn University. From cybersecurity to online education to the processing of grant applications, flexible and powerful technology are required for a modern and effectual university. It is an important element and key enabler of innovation and a significant driver of efficiency and effectiveness. In everything we do, we seek opportunities to leverage technology. We must ensure that our technological applications are well-focused, adaptable, cost-effective, and, where appropriate, centralized. And we are careful that technology does not reduce, but rather reinforces, the human touch that is integral to the *Auburn Experience*.

## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS.

Auburn University has a great story to tell, and we are committed to conveying that story better, to more people, and beyond the *Auburn Family*. Our focus is on elevating our national and international visibility. We strive for recognition for our commitment to excellence, our tremendous capabilities, and our outstanding accomplishments. We must rise in meaningful metrics of university success. Compelling articulation of our value proposition must be a central element of every important endeavor we undertake. Building a strong overarching brand is critical; however, it is equally important that we adapt and translate our messaging to diverse audiences.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND MEASURABILITY.

The strategic plan is not just a plan; it is also a pledge to achieve the goals articulated in the plan. In all commitments we make to our stakeholders, we hold ourselves accountable. Every major program and initiative must be accompanied by a sound rationale and tangible set of success indicators. We will develop metrics and set measurable and aggressive targets for those metrics. And we will regularly track our progress against those targets.



### University Seal

*Upon motion by G. H. Wright, seconded by John Overton, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:*

*RESOLUTION NO. 5 OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE UNIVERSITY WHEREAS, in accordance with Act No. 332 of the Alabama Legislature, as signed by Governor John Patterson on October 30, 1959, the name of The Alabama Polytechnic Institute was changed to AUBURN UNIVERSITY, and WHEREAS, the year of the granting of the Charter of the East Alabama Male College, 1856, will be carried as the year of origin of AUBURN UNIVERSITY, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Trustees of The Alabama Polytechnic Institute.*

## GOAL 1 ELEVATED AUBURN EXPERIENCE

*Inspire and prepare students for life and careers through delivery of an excellent and supportive experience characterized by distinctive, innovative curricula and engaging student life programs.*

Students are Auburn University's number one priority. We maintain a strong track record of student success through innovative, distinctive academic programs and high-impact co-curricular experiences. We are recognized for our commitment to excellence in retention, graduation rates, and academic advising. The satisfaction and success of our students and graduates remain consistently high.

Auburn's on-campus student experiences are the crown jewels of the university. No action we take to execute our strategy should jeopardize this experience. The *Auburn Experience* must not only be protected and enhanced, but leveraged to advance the goals of the university. Through other channels, such as online learning and dual enrollment, our aspiration is to spread the life-changing benefits of the *Auburn Experience* beyond the borders of our campus.

### AN EXCELLENT AND SUPPORTIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCE.

Auburn University's reputation for quality is grounded in its tradition of providing an *excellent* undergraduate and professional education. However, the *Auburn Experience* not only delivers an excellent education, it motivates and prepares our graduates to maximize their potential in their careers and their lives. It is about an excellent experience, both inside and outside the classroom. It is about achieving a broad sense of well-being. It is about producing well-rounded, centered contributors to society. Accordingly, Auburn University has a responsibility to provide students with more than discipline-specific knowledge and skills. We are committed to teaching life and soft skills. This includes leadership, high ethical standards, inclusivity, civic literacy and engagement, the value of hard work, critical thinking, proper attention to detail, wellness, personal financial literacy, and communication skills, among others. Our aim is to inspire and teach our students to be lifelong learners and to embrace life's challenges.

A *supportive* experience is essential to student success. Academic accomplishment is not just driven by intellectual ability. Many other factors impact the success of students, both while at Auburn and after graduation. Students must be encouraged and mentored through their programs. Career counseling and academic advising must be elevated as part of the student experience. A key differentiator of Auburn University's on-campus experience is the personal connection between the faculty/administration and students.

Auburn University is placing an increasing emphasis on measurable outcomes, both while students are at

the university and once they leave. We will improve our assessments of whether students have acquired the knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with the university's desired general education outcomes. We will also get better at identifying high impact practices that have contributed to students' cumulative learning. Finally, we will better track our students' success after graduation. Auburn is committed to quantifiably improving student success.

Of course, a key aim is to ensure that our students are highly sought by industry, government, non-profits, and academia. To this end, we will provide more experiences, particularly professional experiences and research work, that closely align with post-graduation opportunities. We intend to collaborate more closely with industry, academia, and other partners to ensure our curricula, faculty, and other important elements of the student experience are mutually beneficial.

Auburn University recognizes and values the considerable educational benefits provided by diversity as we prepare our students for life and leadership in a multicultural world. Cultural competency is important. Students who interact with and learn about people from a variety of backgrounds are more apt to understand, appreciate, and excel in the communities they inhabit. In this context, diversity is aligned with Auburn University's land-grant mission of providing its students with a superior education in service to the needs of Alabama, the nation, and the world.

### DISTINCTIVE, INNOVATIVE CURRICULA.

Auburn University cultivates a collaborative student culture that supports high academic achievement, resulting in a number of nationally and internationally recognized academic programs. However, rapid changes in what we teach and how we teach it will likely continue. The classroom 20 years in the future will likely bear little resemblance to today's classroom. Accordingly, we will continuously reassess our curricula to ensure it reflects the content, structure, and delivery methods suited to the students of today and tomorrow. Relevance is a key driver of our curricula. We must make way for emerging disciplines and interdisciplinary programs (potentially including the creation of interdisciplinary centers) that support student research and economic development—future focus areas for the university. This means some existing programs might be converted to concentrations or merged with other programs.

Technology will continue to play a significant role in educating our students. We must continue to find creative ways to advance instruction augmented by technology. In particular, more emphasis will be placed on online teaching, resulting in a number of benefits to the university. Online education allows Auburn to extend its reach beyond campus to underserved segments, such as high school students in



dual enrollment programs; students in completer programs; working adults seeking degrees; and lifelong learners and non-degree seekers (in continuing education programs). Online courses also help eliminate bottlenecks in the general core curriculum and provide students with desired flexibility in completing their coursework.

There are a number of approaches and methods in teaching and learning that Auburn University will need to track and assess (for efficacy):

#### ACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.

- *passive learning to active learning (e.g., debate and discussion)*
- *individual learning to collaborative/team-based learning*
- *traditional classrooms to flipped classrooms*
- *immersive learning: gamification and simulations*
- *increased use of technology in instructional design*

#### APPLIED EXPERIENCE.

- *lecture/classroom learning to hands-on/in-the-field learning*
- *theoretical skills to application-based/practical/job-specific skills (i.e., skills that prepare students for careers).*
- *increased service orientation—i.e., more direct impact on the community*
- *greater global focus, including more study abroad programs*

#### STUDENT-DRIVEN LEARNING.

- *teaching to faculty-facilitation and self-learning*
- *calendar-paced courses to modular and self-paced courses*
- *testing-centric evaluation to project-centric evaluation*

#### FLEXIBLE CURRICULA AND PROGRAMS.

- *standardization to customization (for the student)*
- *segmented/distinct progression to seamless progression (e.g., high school to college to graduate school). Example: dual enrollment courses in high schools.*
- *alternate pathways to Auburn University—e.g., dual enrollment, online core courses, and more transfers from two-year colleges—for students with circumstances (e.g., financial need) that preclude a typical on-campus experience*
- *comprehensive education to competency-based education (including granting certificates)*

#### ENGAGING STUDENT LIFE PROGRAMS.

A holistic approach to advancing student success is essential. This means creating a consolidated and coherent set of programs, services, and activities for students that span their time at Auburn University, from orientation to graduation. Recently, the university consolidated co-curricular activities, services, and functions under the Division of Student Affairs to better achieve this cohesive and supportive experience for students.

Student life areas requiring more attention include: accommodating every incoming freshman that desires to live on-campus; providing increased parking; making our campus one of the safest in the country; improving accessibility; and enhancing mental health counseling.

Auburn has a long history of strong student governance and seeking student input. We are committed to engaging students in all aspects of academic and campus life.



#### University Logo

The University logo made its first appearance on football uniforms in fall of 1966 under Shug Jordan's leadership. Even before the University was officially recognized as Auburn University in 1959, it was commonly referred to as Auburn by most. Over the years, the AU logo has become a primary identifier for the Auburn family. While the University has additional secondary logos, the AU has stood the test of time as a representation of the Auburn spirit.

## GOAL 2

### TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH

*Elevate research and scholarly impact to address society's critical issues and promote economic development in Alabama and beyond.*

Elevating Auburn University's research profile is imperative to earning our place among the most impactful universities that truly transform the world. Whether creative endeavors, such as artistic works and performances, or scholarly output, such as academic publications or inventions, we promote these activities because they prompt intellectual advancement and expand learning. However, to truly elevate our research and transformative impact, we will invest more in research and development programs that address society's most challenging issues. And increasingly, we will measure impact by jobs created, lives saved, patents and licenses granted, companies recruited or started, new technologies and products introduced, and similar tangible measures of success.

Elevating the research enterprise advances the teaching mission by ensuring that faculty stay current in the leading developments in their fields of study and engage the community in their research. Enhancing research advances the service mission by creating greater opportunities to engage the community and by providing transformative solutions to both local and global problems.

Six areas have been identified as essential to elevating Auburn University's scholarly and research impact.

FACULTY AND RESEARCH-ENGAGED STUDENTS  
CULTURE  
PROCESS AND CAPABILITIES  
IMPACT  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
FOCUS

#### FACULTY AND RESEARCH-ENGAGED STUDENTS.

To elevate its research impact, Auburn University will increase its research capacity through the hiring of additional faculty. This faculty recruitment effort will impact most elements of the research enterprise by allowing resources to better align with research priorities through targeted hiring in specific areas of research.

Increasing and strengthening Auburn's research-intensive student population, specifically in PhD and professional programs, is a further prerequisite to elevating our impact. Graduate and post-graduate researchers are needed to support research-oriented faculty. We will implement new recruitment strategies and target top graduate school

candidates from across the nation and world. We will adjust our international recruitment efforts to align with anticipated enrollment trends while continuing to place a strategic focus on the recruitment of students from the US. We will continue to enhance graduate fellowship programs.

#### CULTURE.

Strengthening the research culture and career-long research engagement are essential to propelling Auburn to the top ranks of research universities. Research distinction and continued research engagement is the expectation. Areas of excellence must expand to the entire research enterprise and be enhanced by collaboration across disciplines. Achieving this cross-university excellence requires changing incentives, support mechanisms, and organizational structure. This includes carving out specific time for faculty to conduct research. It also includes ensuring faculty are appropriately recognized and rewarded for their accomplishments. Raising our visibility is critical to changing our research culture and to our ability to recruit. Continued success will require less risk aversion and pursuing opportunities with more deliberate speed. As we work to increase our research capacity, the hiring of new faculty presents an opportunity to facilitate and accelerate a culture and paradigm shift in our research enterprise.

#### PROCESS AND CAPABILITIES.

Well-defined, efficient, and streamlined institutional processes and capabilities foster transformational research and characterize the best research enterprises. Auburn University will more deeply inculcate these traits in our research. First, we will be more strategic in our program development and product differentiation. Second, policies and procedures will be streamlined, more efficient, and appropriately risk-tolerant. Simplified administrative processes and policies are important to promote research engagement. Third, continuity in the *transformative research process*—beginning with basic research and ending with start-up incubation/acceleration—is our aim. We will demonstrate university-wide, end-to-end capability to efficiently and effectively translate basic research into practical solutions with broad market uptake. Fourth, research administration, as incentivized partners, will be more closely connected with research success. Where appropriate, technology will be applied to better enable the traits described above.

Partnering is an especially important component of, and opportunity for, our research enterprise. Auburn University must become easier to work with. We will better leverage Auburn relationships with federal, state, and local governments and with industry, particularly advanced manufacturing firms. The paths to these partnerships should be easy, characterized by simple and practical



agreements. For key research partners, we will establish goals and engagement plans.

## IMPACT.

Auburn University's research will have a more discernable and transformative impact. Our research must grow our recognition and reputation, contribute to the body of knowledge, or solve practical problems—ideally, all three. To receive funding, research increasingly must be directly linked to stakeholder benefits that are clearly communicated and link back to the tripartite mission of education, research, and service.

Auburn University is increasingly focusing on research and technology transition that aligns with customer and market needs. Such opportunities require we engage in basic research with tangible and identified translational impact. They also require that we better leverage favorable socio-political factors in Alabama and the Southeast, including population growth; transformational research needs; flourishing space, defense, biotechnology and manufacturing industries; and strong economic growth.

Our university is increasingly a launchpad for entrepreneurs, industry leaders, government officials, and others, as we improve quality of life and create economic opportunities. Such approaches allow us to more easily tap business and capital markets for funding research and development. Offering many research advantages, Auburn University is being sought out by partners whose research efforts are often hampered by high overhead costs and institutional inertia. Moreover, our research-active students address our partners' critical workforce development needs that undergird true innovation.

We have many great research success stories to tell, but we need more. We also must tell our research success stories better. *Glaring examples* of Auburn University's research success must be broadly disseminated so that the visibility and stature of our research enterprise can further propel our efforts.

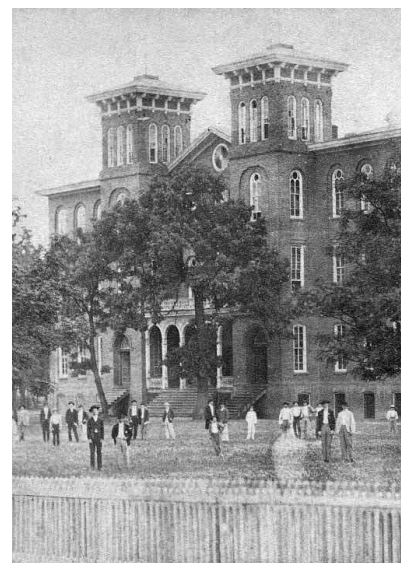
## INFRASTRUCTURE.

Auburn University currently possesses much of the infrastructure—laboratories and equipment—required for world-class research. In the future, we will better leverage and synchronize these existing assets, expand critical technical and equipment support infrastructure, and work more closely with local entities and initiatives. Assessing and planning for equipment and infrastructure upgrades, including identifying opportunities to share resources across schools and colleges, is a priority.

## FOCUS.

Auburn University is nationally and internationally recognized and respected for strength in certain research areas. These bases of expertise are serving as a platform for extending our research enterprise. Research strengths need to intersect with those areas with the highest demand for research. These high-demand research

areas often closely correlate with the *Grand Challenges* as described by the NSF, NIH and other major federal government funding agencies. In the case of industry, our focus is on innovation (i.e., commercialization of intellectual property) and high economic-multiplier manufacturing jobs. Auburn University must attain *enough* momentum in *enough* areas to maintain research sustainability and further elevate its research profile.



### Old Main

*In 1859, the original Samford Hall was constructed as a main building for the East Alabama Male College. It was a four story structure, Italianate in design, and was erected at a cost of \$111,000. It was affectionately known as "Old Main." School was suspended in 1862 due to the Civil War and the building was used as a hospital until classes resumed in 1866. On June 24, 1887, Old Main burned. It was rebuilt in 1888 from plans by Bruce and Morgan, architects, with James Smith as the contractor. A ceremony was held the first day of construction with Charles B. Glenn, at the age of eight, laying the first brick.*

## GOAL 3

### IMPACTFUL SERVICE

*Expand our land-grant and service capabilities to foster greater innovation and engagement that enhances the quality of life and economic development in Alabama and beyond.*

Impactful service is a key element of our land-grant mission that leverages the other two mission elements: an elevated student experience and transformative research. Auburn University must engage our students, graduates, faculty, and partners to transform the fruits of our research and scholarship into transformational products, methods, and services that meet our communities' most pressing needs and that take the state of Alabama to new heights.

Auburn University's service function is primarily accomplished through Extension and Outreach, which are two distinct entities—separately funded and staffed. They distribute our innovations and give us a presence in every county. Outreach provides a broad and diverse range of educational services and programs across the state and is often a first provider of information and assistance to the underserved and disadvantaged. Extension has a long legacy of agricultural advising, urban and rural community service, and 4-H programs throughout Alabama, providing expertise and education to all counties in Alabama through county, regional, and state staffing.

#### SERVICE OBJECTIVES.

Three overarching objectives have been defined to increase Auburn University's service impact:

##### • FIRST RESOURCE.

We will be recognized by the State as the first resource for providing practical and innovative solutions to social, economic and environmental issues that allow Auburn to exploit the talents of our students and faculty. We shall extend our reach beyond traditional areas—for example, into manufacturing assistance, workforce development, business incubation and acceleration, and technology transfer.

##### • EXPANDED EDUCATIONAL REACH.

We will increase access to educational opportunities and lifelong learning across the State, especially in underserved communities. By expanding Auburn's capacity to assist individuals and communities, we are encouraging innovation and creating new opportunities that elevate our university-community partnerships. Online education, enabled by technology, will be a key thrust of our efforts to reach more citizens. We will also better leverage existing assets and capabilities, such as Extension offices in all Alabama counties, continuing education programs, and community partnerships.

##### • ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

We will strengthen our engagement with both the public and private sectors in the State of Alabama to provide increased workforce development and economic growth. Working together, we will develop new technologies that create and retain well-paying jobs in Alabama.

#### SERVICE OBJECTIVES ACHIEVEMENT.

Achieving the three service objectives entails several actions.

**FIRST**, we will more clearly define Auburn University's service functions. This includes (1) better definition of the relationship between Outreach and Extension and (2) more differentiation of their respective roles.

**SECOND**, we will promote greater awareness of Outreach and Extension among various stakeholder groups. The importance of community engagement and civic engagement as societal functions must be conveyed, including clear delineation of the roles of Outreach and Extension in this engagement. Stakeholders must better understand that both Outreach and Extension have expanded far beyond their traditional scope of service.

**THIRD**, we will better demonstrate the value created by Outreach and Extension. This requires developing a clear, concise, and compelling set of metrics, setting targets for these metrics, and tracking and reporting progress against these targets.

**FOURTH**, we will better communicate the value provided to the community through Auburn University's service programs.

**FIFTH**, we will more strongly push toward self-sustainment, including more revenue generation from programs and increased external fund-raising.

## GOAL 4

### EXCEPTIONAL AND ENGAGED FACULTY AND STAFF

*Invest in our outstanding people to advance the university's mission through recruitment, development, support, recognition, rewards, and retention.*

Faculty and staff are core to our mission. Their success is Auburn's success. To achieve our vision, we must recruit and retain the best and the brightest scholars and staff. We must develop and support them. And we must demonstrate how much they are valued through recognition and rewards. Through these efforts, Auburn University will become more widely recognized as a premier academic home for some of the world's most talented faculty and staff.

Over the next five years, Auburn University is on course to increase research capacity by hiring additional faculty. This presents a rare opportunity to tightly align the skills and background of these new faculty with our mission, vision, themes, goals, and values. These new hires will be research- and scholarship-focused. However, we will ensure that our outstanding student experience is not diminished by this hiring initiative, which will also include selectively hiring of full-time teaching faculty to better serve our students. Hiring will be concentrated in disciplines that support our focus areas in research and teaching.

#### RECRUITMENT.

Auburn University will attract top faculty and staff through increased focus that results in recognized expertise in target disciplines. Leading faculty attract other top faculty. Methods of achieving this renown include: establishing research centers and PhD programs in emphasis areas; cluster hiring; and more endowed chairs and professorships.

Compensation and benefits will be competitive with peers and commensurate with the quality of faculty and staff being recruited. A collegial, representative and inclusive work environment is important to attracting the right talent to our university and improving diversity. Effective marketing and communications to prospective faculty and staff is essential. The following strengths are important to emphasize in recruitment: competitive benefits; an attractive campus and surrounding community; innovative academic facilities; high profile research centers; high levels of job satisfaction; academically gifted students; a high quality of life; and strong Division I athletics. However, we must increasingly consider concerns of the next generation of faculty and staff, with emphasis on collaborative work environments; spousal/partner support; and childcare/eldercare.

#### DEVELOPMENT.

Auburn University will more actively encourage and reward professional growth of faculty and staff. This includes (1) a greater investment in professional development and (2) providing more opportunities for professional development. Particular focus areas include tenure and promotion processes and providing full career mentoring from onboarding through promotion to full professor. Another focus area is proper training of staff supervisors, with an emphasis on customer service, collaboration, communications, transparency, and proactivity.

#### SUPPORT.

A supportive environment is necessary to maximize the teaching, research, and service contributions of faculty and staff.

#### CULTURE.

Auburn University is committed to a culture of shared values with an ethos that promotes integrity, encourages diversity, and inspires work. We will continue to strengthen our shared governance model and nourish a community of faculty and staff who have a deep sense of belonging to the university and pride in their connections with it. We will build a leadership capability that sets direction and expectations of staff to embrace change as needed to deliver the ambitions of the university. We will remain cognizant of the increasing need to act with deliberate speed to achieve our goals. Calculated risk-taking and a bias for action will be emphasized.

#### PROCESSES.

Auburn University is committed to continuously improving faculty and staff processes. Two principles are essential in the ongoing evaluation of our operations. First, we are committed to streamlining processes to increase their efficiency and effectiveness, including (1) reducing steps and approvals and (2) relaxing overly burdensome requirements. Second, we are committed to the consistent application of policies and procedures across the university. Where prudent and cost-effective, technologies will be implemented to achieve operational excellence.

#### RESEARCH.

The strategic plan makes research a high priority for faculty and staff. To support this priority, Auburn University will (1) make targeted investments in specific research infrastructure, as deemed necessary and (2) re-engineer research policies and processes, as needed, to make them more efficient and effective. In particular, policies, infrastructure, incentives, and resource allocation will be evaluated for potential realignment to better support the university's objectives of more interdisciplinary research and increased innovation.



## HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES.

A number of human resources policies require evaluation and revision. First, Auburn University is committed to providing a better work-life balance for employees. Second, we will provide more support for partners and spouses, particularly in the area of employment. This could include the development of a spouse/partner hiring policy consistent with current laws and university policies. Third, more emphasis will be placed on the concerns of female faculty/staff. Regardless of gender, particular attention will be paid to tuition waivers and remission; childcare; and family medical leave. Lastly, we will put increased emphasis on the needs of our staff.

## RECOGNITION.

Celebrating the achievements of our faculty and staff is essential. We must seize every opportunity to publicize—both within the Auburn Family and beyond—the contributions of our faculty and staff. This includes vigorously promoting our faculty expertise. Proper recognition requires key media placements and faculty training in how to spread our message of success. It also requires more effective links between college/school marketing staff and central marketing and communications.

## REWARDS.

Rewards refer to both salary and benefits. Over time and as we recruit new hires, pay should be equalized relative to our peer institutions. Employee benefits must remain competitive with our peers. As we hire new faculty and staff, guidelines for addressing market-driven adjustments for existing employees must be considered. Rewards must be more explicitly linked to behaviors we want to incent and to performances. Incentives must closely align with the priorities established by the six strategic goals.

## RETENTION.

If investment in the previous four areas—development, support, recognition, and rewards—is done effectively, retention should be high. However, a few other actions should be considered to further improve retention. This includes awarding of professorships and endowed chairs, continuing to raise the quality of incoming students, and generally enhancing the reputation of the school.

## Auburn University

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*Throughout the years, the institution has had four official names:*

*East Alabama Male College (1856–72)  
Agricultural and Mechanical College (1872–99)  
Alabama Polytechnic Institute (1899–1960)  
Auburn University (1960–present)*

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*Auburn's current colleges and schools and dates of inception are:*

*College of Agriculture, 1872  
Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, 1872  
Graduate School, 1872  
James Harrison School of Pharmacy, 1885  
College of Veterinary Medicine, 1907  
College of Architecture, Design and Construction, 1907  
College of Education, 1915  
College of Human Sciences, 1916  
Raymond J. Harbert College of Business, 1967  
School of Nursing, 1979  
School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, 1984  
College of Sciences and Mathematics, 1986  
College of Liberal Arts, 1986*

*\* In 1986, the colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences & Mathematics were created from the former schools of Arts & Sciences, Agriculture and Biological Sciences, and Architecture and Fine Arts.*

## GOAL 5 STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT

### *Achieve a robust and diverse enrollment of students while enhancing access, affordability, and academic quality.*

Enrollment might be Auburn University's biggest challenge over the next five years and beyond. Demographics and affordability issues are increasing competition for a shrinking pool of qualified students. The number of high school graduates nationally is declining and is predicted to drop significantly over the next decade. Complicating matters, affordability issues are causing some qualified students not to matriculate in college. Auburn University must ready itself for this decline in qualified students through (1) mindful, proactive enrollment management actions that support recruitment and retention of students, with an emphasis on underrepresented students, and (2) increasing graduate enrollment. Addressing accessibility and affordability is critical to sustainability, requiring the university to more aggressively pursue initiatives, such as online education, dual enrollment, two-year school partnerships, and flexible curricula.

### ACHIEVING ROBUST AND DIVERSE ENROLLMENT.

*Robust* is defined as "capable of performing well under a wide range of conditions." Auburn University must achieve *robust* enrollment that can withstand the adverse forces (e.g., demographics, affordability) expected to buffet higher education over the next decade or more. This will require us to diversify our portfolio of students and tap less traditional segments. We must more fully seize opportunities that exist with dual enrollment, transfer students, and nontraditional students. To do this, we must overhaul our student recruitment efforts, including how we market to prospective students. We must be more intentional about the way we create academic opportunities, making sure they are inclusive and meet the needs of all types of students. This includes exploring more partnerships with two-year schools and expanding online programs. These efforts will ensure we continue to recruit, enroll, and retain the special caliber of student we want at Auburn.

Fortifying our student enrollment is supported by the theme of diversity—i.e., increasing the proportion of underrepresented students. In particular, Auburn University's proportion of African American students, stagnant for the last decade, needs to improve markedly. We must identify and implement programs to strengthen the pipeline into Auburn University of diverse students. This includes developing a tailored approach to reinforcing our brand among multicultural, diverse, and first-generation prospective students.

### ENHANCING ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND ACADEMIC QUALITY.

Improving access and affordability is a means for making enrollment more robust and diverse and will naturally attract students from under-tapped and more diverse segments. We aim to make Auburn University an option for all who are ready and able to meet its standards, regardless of income or social status. In particular, we must increase access for Pell-eligible and first-generation students. This requires re-directing some monies to need-based financial aid for qualified students.

We are also more aggressively implementing pathway programs, such as dual enrollment, for high school and transfer students. We will develop more innovative ways to provide funding to students and seek partnerships to provide tuition support. We also must increase the value of an Auburn degree by not only lowering/defraying its costs but also increasing its benefits.

Raising academic standards and improving access and affordability should be reinforcing; academic quality should not be compromised.

### ENROLLMENT STRATEGIES.

Enrollment strategies must directly address the question of growth. Should there be growth? And if so, in what areas? These questions are best addressed by first focusing upon on-campus, undergraduate enrollment. First-time freshmen enrollment in 2018 was 4,783. An enrollment plan should carefully consider (1) the impact of growth on the Auburn Experience for on-campus students and (2) capital expenditures necessary to support such growth. Other opportunities for growth should certainly be explored, such as promoting increased summer enrollment to take advantage of unused capacity. Expansion of internships, study abroad, and other off-campus programs also present opportunities to grow enrollment and enrich the *Auburn Experience* without increasing the on-campus student population or requiring significant capital expenditures.

To achieve a more robust undergraduate enrollment, Auburn should also explore actions to adjust (up or down) enrollment in particular majors or colleges. Consideration should be given to admitting students at the college level, instead of at the university level. To the extent that on-campus undergraduate enrollment growth is pursued, it should (1) be driven by specific programs where there is a clear and demonstrable employer or societal demand, (2) be supported by a compelling business case, and (3) clearly enhance the university's reputation.

To achieve more robust enrollment, Auburn University will also strengthen and expand off-campus education channels (or *pathway* programs), including dual enrollment, online

instruction, completer programs, master's programs for working adults, and non-degree (e.g., certificates) programs. Managed properly, enrollment growth in these programs should not impact the residential campus experience. With online programs, it is essential that targeted marketing efforts align with enrollment trends of online degree programs to ensure enrollment capacity is fully used. Online courses also need to be significantly increased and improved (e.g., to be more interactive and simulative of a live classroom environment).

Auburn University is committed to its land-grant mission to serve all Alabamians, including students from underserved, rural parts of the state. In setting our future enrollment objectives, we must consider our mix of in-state and out-of-state students (currently at 60% and 40%, respectively) and the total number of Alabama undergraduate students that should be enrolled in each incoming first-year class (currently around 2,900).

Any growth strategy must *not* dilute AU's admissions standards. Our enrollment strategy should continue to raise admissions standards and improve selectivity. This requires that merit-based financial aid be competitive with other public institutions, both in Alabama and nationally.

To support elevating the research enterprise, substantive growth is required in the graduate enrollment of research-oriented students to support research faculty.

An objective of future enrollment is to improve our undergraduate selectivity. We seek to increase the number of applications received by Auburn while continuing to raise academic standards. To accomplish this, we will increase our marketing efforts in other regions of the country. Within the Southeast, we will strive to dissuade potential freshman applicants from *self-selecting* out of applying for various reasons. These reasons may include a perception that acceptance standards are too high, the university is not diverse or inclusive, or that Auburn is too expensive or elitist.

Improving access and affordability is a key enrollment objective, the accomplishment of which should also markedly increase student diversity. This improvement will require that funding be increased for need-based aid, both from institutional and private sources. Any enhanced financial aid program should be extended to prospective transfer students. Access might also be addressed by increasing the pool of college-ready applicants in Alabama. Many of Alabama's high school graduates are not academically competitive; therefore Auburn is committed to creating stronger partnerships with other institutions, such as two-year schools, to develop inclusive pathways to our university. We will also consider avenues to improve the college readiness of Alabama's high school students.

Improved access will also be achieved by providing more assistance to international students in navigating increasingly stringent and complex federal regulations for matriculation at US colleges.

Effective marketing and communications are a critical component of Auburn University's enrollment strategies. The overarching institutional brand must be cohesive and compelling; however, messaging must be tailored to targeted segments to tap new pools of prospective students. We will boldly promote the Auburn University brand with innovative marketing approaches. Marketing efforts will be increased outside of the Southeast. Lastly, tools—like predictive analytics and customer relationship management applications—are required to better compete with peer universities.



### *Samford Hall*

*Samford Hall was officially named for Governor William James Samford in May, 1929. Through the years, the interior of this building has been renovated many times to meet the changes of a growing college. Samford Hall originally had a bell that rang every hour for classes, and although the bell still remains in the tower, an electrically controlled clock marks the time now.*



## GOAL 6

### OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

**Implement operational efficiency and effectiveness measures that continuously support a culture of high performance at all levels of the university.**

Auburn University will continue to demonstrate excellent stewardship of its physical, human, and financial resources. We are fortunate to have generous donors and strong support from the state of Alabama. Nevertheless, we must continue to seize every opportunity to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Certain actions, if well executed, result in higher levels of operational excellence. In our quest for operational excellence, we must be careful not to degrade campus collegiality. Potential opportunities to achieve operational excellence are described below.

#### INCREASED COLLABORATION.

A means to achieve operational excellence is to collaborate rather than compete. We are all on the same Auburn team and working toward shared goals. We must work across intra-organizational boundaries to achieve operational excellence. This means that units must often share or pool resources, including increased centralization of some functions.

#### PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.

Opportunities to partner with private enterprise to better accomplish the goals of the university should be evaluated. Such partnerships allow the university and private partners to achieve synergy through leveraging the advantages—for Auburn, its assets and brand—that each party brings to the partnerships.

#### TECHNOLOGY APPLICATION.

Technology is often a key driver of operational excellence. Every opportunity will be taken to apply technology in a smart and cost-justified manner to better support core research and operational functions.

#### SUSTAINABLE BUDGET MODELS.

Auburn University is committed to sustainable budget models and associated budget systems that support growth in income, especially from diversified sources. Our aims are to:

- *Ensure transparency and provide financial information to enable our faculty and administrators to make well-informed decisions.*
- *Ensure all major initiatives and funding decisions are supported by high quality strategic and financial planning.*
- *Encourage more agile, risk-informed decision-making.*

#### OVERHEAD COST REDUCTION.

Every effort will be made to reduce overhead costs. This reduction provides an opportunity (1) to reflect strategically about long-term investments, operations, and resources and (2) to set priorities and free up resources for them.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE OVERBURDEN ELIMINATION.

Burdensome policies, practices, and procedures that provide little benefit and often sap institutional energy will be reviewed and revised to balance proper controls with compliance costs.

#### CENTRALIZATION.

Centralizing functions is a common means of achieving operational excellence through the elimination of redundancy and consistent application of policy and practices.

#### SOURCING.

Functions and processes not core to the university's mission should be considered for procurement from a third party. (Conversely, functions and processes core to the university's mission that are currently provided by a third party should be considered for accomplishment with internal resources.) The intent is to focus the university on strategic activities, where it is critical to excel. Strategic focus and alignment are the key criteria. Properly executed, appropriate internal/external sourcing enhances flexibility; improves outcomes and cuts costs; is seamless/invisible, and; considers the impact on employees and other stakeholders.

#### SUSTAINABILITY.

Auburn's land-grant mission calls on us to improve the environmental, economic, societal, and individual conditions of people in Alabama and beyond. We will leverage our commitment to these four pillars of sustainability to transform global challenges into drivers for innovation and transformation. Where cost-effective and practicable, policies, practices, and procedures will incorporate the principles of sustainability.

#### REDUCED REGULATION.

Some opportunities might exist at both the state and federal levels to revise regulations that impede operational excellence. This includes the imposition of unfunded federal mandates.

#### DEFERRED MAINTENANCE AND RENOVATION.

Auburn University will evaluate and prioritize a growing backlog of deferred building maintenance and renovation to ensure the benefits of deferral does not entail greater costs for the university in the future.

#### INCREASED TRAINING.

Training and professional development are needed in some areas to appropriately skill staff to execute their functions properly.

## AUBURN UNIVERSITY VALUES: THE AUBURN CREED

Auburn's values are captured by George Petrie in *The Auburn Creed*. Petrie was a historian, college professor, and coach of Auburn's first football team. In addition to introducing football to Auburn University, Petrie brought innovative methods of teaching history to the university and mentored students who went on to become renowned historians. Petrie served as a professor and administrator at Auburn University for 53 years. In 1943, shortly after retiring, George Petrie penned *The Auburn Creed*. At the time, World War II was raging across the globe. It was in these dark days that Professor Petrie poetically affirmed the immutable set of values that have guided Auburn University since its inception and that have maintained their relevance to the current day.

### THE AUBURN CREED

*I believe that this is a practical world and that I can count only on what I earn. Therefore, I believe in work, hard work. I believe in education, which gives me the knowledge to work wisely and trains my mind and my hands to work skillfully. I believe in honesty and truthfulness, without which I cannot win the respect and confidence of my fellow men. I believe in a sound mind, in a sound body and a spirit that is not afraid, and in clean sports that develop these qualities. I believe in obedience to law because it protects the rights of all. I believe in the human touch, which cultivates sympathy with my fellow men and mutual helpfulness and brings happiness for all. I believe in my country, because it is a land of freedom and because it is my own home, and that I can best serve that country by "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with my God." And because Auburn men and women believe in these things, I believe in Auburn and love it.*

—George Petrie



### George Petrie

Nearly every Auburn alumnus knows the words to the Auburn Creed that Petrie wrote in 1943 describing the incredible character of this university. What many do not know is that Petrie left a lasting legacy to Auburn University, perhaps larger than anyone else, through his devotion to Auburn athletics, academics, and the Auburn spirit.

Petrie is also Auburn's first faculty member to hold a PhD and the founder of Auburn's history department, graduate school, and athletics program. He was at Auburn through two world wars and to see the first woman grace the campus. He also coached Auburn to its first football win in 1892. Petrie's contributions to Auburn University are undeniable and his spirit unparalleled.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A disciplined, nine-month process was followed to develop Auburn University's strategic plan. In June 2018, a 12-member, faculty-led Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was convened to formulate Auburn University's strategic plan. The members of this committee represented a broad cross-section of the university, including faculty at all levels, administrators, the student government president, an extension coordinator, and a donor-alum.

The key question for the SPC was: What should Auburn University's priorities be over the next five years to create sustainable competitive advantage and best position the university to realize its 20-year vision?

The SPC established a project plan consisting of four overlapping phases:

- 1 Situation Analysis (June – September 2018): *A fact-driven and detailed perspective on Auburn University's current situation was developed.*
- 2 Interviews and Listening Sessions (August – October 2018): *Substantive input from Auburn University's stakeholders was gathered.*
- 3 Strategy Formulation (September – November 2018): *Strategic options were identified and evaluated, resulting in a strategic framework to guide the university: mission, vision, themes, goals, and values.*
- 4 Strategic Plan Development (November 2018 – February 2019): *A strategic plan was written that explains Auburn University's mission, vision, themes, goals, and values.*

### SITUATION ANALYSIS.

The SPC analyzed Auburn University's current situation to develop a "burning platform" for change that would provide a well-researched, fact-driven foundation for Auburn's strategic plan. The team focused on six key areas:

- Transformational Research and Scholarship and Economic Development and Partnerships
- Student Experience and Success
- Faculty, Staff, and Administrative and Professional Recruitment and Development
- Outreach and Extension
- Inclusion and Diversity
- Operational Efficiencies, Effectiveness and Academic Sustainability

### INTERVIEWS AND LISTENING SESSIONS.

More than 650 of Auburn's constituents provided input through interviews and listening sessions.

Over 70 interviews were conducted with trustees, deans, staff, administrators, students, alumni, donors, and extension coordinators, including:

- All 15 trustees
- All 14 deans
- 17 senior administrators
- 21 administrators, faculty, students, and alums

Listening sessions were conducted around the country and on-campus—32 in all, involving 42 different focus groups and more than 650 constituents.

- 14 statewide and Atlanta sessions that included alums, donors, industry partners, employers, state government officials, parents, faculty, administrators, and county extension agents
- 10 on-campus sessions for students, staff, and faculty
- Alumni Association Board
- Foundation Board, involving three break-out sessions
- Four campus governing bodies
- Provost leadership retreat, involving 91 deans, associate deans, and department chairs/heads, separated into seven break-out sessions
- Library staff

### STRATEGY FORMULATION.

In workshops, the SPC developed goals, themes, a mission, and a vision. These workshops included some previous interviewees and listening session attendees. The SPC also engaged in scenario planning, where future scenarios for higher education were developed and used to develop alternative strategic options for consideration. Multiple drafts of team deliverables were circulated to Auburn University's senior leadership team (SLT) and the Board of Trustees (BOT) for review and feedback. The SPC considered SLT and BOT input, making revisions where appropriate.

### STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT.

Based on the goals, themes, values, mission, and vision, a strategic plan was written that was reviewed and discussed by the BOT at its February 14, 2019 workshop. The resulting strategic plan will be operationalized by the SLT, including development of (1) an implementation plan that includes tactical goals and quantified objectives, with associated key performance indicators, and (2) unit plans that align with the university's strategic and implementation plans. Major implementation plan elements and associated Key Performance Indicators will be presented for review, discussion, and in some cases, formal approval, by the Board of Trustees at future board meetings.

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*Note: Tim Becker, founder and owner of Probitry Business Group, was hired to facilitate the strategic planning process. Becker was formerly a strategy partner with Accenture. Becker has a 16-year affiliation with Auburn University that includes lecturing on strategic planning and assisting with the development of the Raymond J. Harbert College of Business's strategic plan in 2011–2. Becker was assisted by an associate, David McMillan, who oversaw the situation analysis.*