



CALDWELL
UNIVERSITY

Caldwell University 2020 – 2023:
Protecting the Legacy - Shaping the Future

Executive Summary presented to the Board of Trustees
June 18, 2020



Caldwell University 2020 – 2023: *Protecting the Legacy - Shaping the Future*

Introduction

As the university reached the final months of its current five-year strategic plan, *Caldwell University 2015-2020: Continuing the Legacy*, we were putting the finishing touches on a new plan, preparing to celebrate the many contributions of our departing first lay president of eleven years, Dr. Nancy H. Blattner, and enthusiastically awaiting the arrival of our new president, Dr. Matthew Whelan. Then, almost overnight, the tragic reality of the Covid19 pandemic struck. Our new plan, *Caldwell 2023: Protecting the Legacy - Shaping the Future* is a three-year plan launching in the midst of massive and accelerated change posing an existential threat to institutions of higher education, particularly small tuition-driven, faith-based colleges and universities such as Caldwell.

Eleven years ago when we welcomed Dr. Blattner, the university was confronted with a deep economic recession and declining demographics. The financial challenges we faced seemed insurmountable. In the five years that followed, financial controls were imposed, initiatives to increase enrollment and residence hall occupancy were successful, strategic new programs were launched, space was repurposed, prestigious accreditations were obtained, and we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the college and became a university!

In the five-year plan that will be completed June 30, 2020, the positive momentum continued even as we faced chronic financial challenges. In the first year of the plan, we joined with our sponsoring congregation, the Sisters of Saint Dominic of Caldwell, in celebration of the 800 year anniversary of the founding of the Dominican order. Significant accomplishments over the course of the five years included;

- As a university, restructuring academic departments into schools and colleges
- Launching new academic programs including graduate programs in Higher Education and Population Health and undergraduate programs in Healthcare Administration, Public Health Education, Computer Science, and E-Sports Management.

- Successfully launching the quiet phase of a comprehensive campaign providing opportunities to improve facilities and enhance the experience of our students and campus community at large.
- Increasing enrollment and school spirit through the addition of multiple sports teams, including men's lacrosse and sprint football.
- Constructing an arena to house our new competitive E-Sports team.
- Creating collaborative library and classroom spaces.
- Converting unused locker rooms into Art Therapy classrooms.
- Converting a classroom into the Mueller Gallery to showcase our own and local artists' work.
- Hosting the Saint John's Bible for a year.
- Opening a Starbucks Cafe with expanded student gathering spaces in Werner Hall.
- Creating the Eileen Jones Multicultural Center.
- And perhaps the crowning glory, opening the Sister Mary Dominic Tweedus, OP Chapel, thereby achieving our dream of a centrally located space to highlight our Catholic Dominican identity.

Despite the harsh reality, challenges, and unknowns of a pre-vaccine global pandemic, on July 1, 2020, Dr. Whelan will assume the presidency of a university that has achieved the ranking of Best Value School in New Jersey. Caldwell is number 18 overall in Best Value Schools in the Regional Universities North category according to U.S. News & World Report 2020 Best Colleges list and ranks as a high performer among Regional Universities in the North for social mobility, ethnic diversity, and most international students. The University is also ranked among the top 75 regional universities in the North. Now, we must build on these strengths.

More than ever, Caldwell's focus must be on ensuring the sustainability of the institution to preserve the legacy of the founding Sisters of St. Dominic and to rebuild operations to best serve our students. Grounded in dedication to our mission, we must look for the unseen benefits and opportunities that will come of this new reality. We have achieved enormous flexibility in our ability to teach remotely, and we have learned new methods and creative ways of engaging our students academically and socially. A strong IT infrastructure, cloud-based applications, videoconferencing, and our Google platform have enabled faculty and staff to stay connected outside of the classroom and to conduct business in a dynamic and effective way. The workplace will be forever changed as sick and work-from-home policies evolve. Students will expect flexibility in course delivery and scheduling. Faculty have acquired and are honing new skills in synchronous, hybrid, remote, and online teaching. Efficiencies will be born of this experience enabled by technology, including an acceleration toward a paperless environment. The university is navigating a crash course in crisis management, invoking and expanding the existing pandemic plan. The demonstrated dedication and resiliency of many will enable us to shift from pandemic response to pandemic recovery mode. Several years of operating in a risk, safety and compliance-conscious manner have served us well, and this experience will prepare us for future challenges as no drill could ever have done.

The strategic planning process began in the late fall semester of 2018 with a comprehensive analysis of our mission. Endeavoring to root the new plan firmly in the mission of the university required introspection on the parts of all faculty, staff and students. We asked ourselves what we meant when each element and every word of the mission statement was written. Focus groups and workshops were conducted to have thoughtful discussions about whether each phrase continued to resonate in the current environment. The task force charged with reviewing our core documents presented options for review by the full Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). Two faculty members serving on the task force even incorporated the mission inventory exercise into their courses for the semester. It was decided that while there may indeed be opportunities to update the mission statement, we would wait for our new president and involve him in that important process.

As in the past, the SPC worked hard to understand the context in which we were planning. There were presentations on demographic projections, value proposition, Generation X parents and Generation Z students, the economic and political landscape, student engagement survey feedback, capacity and classroom optimization analysis, higher education trends, the Governor's Economic Plan, and the plan from the Secretary of Higher Education that included a NJ Student Bill of Rights. This Bill of Rights would inspire a deliberate incorporation of ways to eliminate obstacles to student success into our plan. A number of these presentations were shared at Board of Trustees meetings. Finally, a new enterprise risk analysis was drafted to inform the plan as well.

Following the completion of the plan, and in the midst of the pandemic quarantine, we have witnessed the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. These senseless killings of people of color have ignited the nation in protest condemning racism and demanding change. Caldwell University must be dedicated to educating the campus community and protecting the rights of all people recognizing the inherent dignity of every human being. Our new plan calls for an inclusive campus environment that addresses the needs of all students, faculty and staff in keeping with our core values of respect, integrity, community and excellence.

A comprehensive SWOT analysis was conducted with every constituent group including students, faculty, staff, undergraduate resident and commuter students, graduate students, alumni, cabinet, board of trustees, and representatives from the external community. A retreat for the SPC and the cabinet was held in October 2019 to review and discuss what this data was telling us.

Administrative departments across the campus presented their own five-year plans through their vice presidents to the SPC. Each academic department presented as well. It was then up to the executive committee of the SPC to extract the higher-level strategic themes in order to develop the broad goals and supporting strategies. Once the full SPC and Cabinet had embraced the structure of the plan, the executive committee inserted the tactics to support the strategies that will accomplish our goals and brought the draft to the SPC for review. Finally, the goals and strategies were circulated to the full campus in a survey asking whether individuals felt that as written,

”this new plan would provide the framework for success in fulfilling our mission, addressing the needs of the university, and providing strategic direction for the institution.” The results were very positive.

Caldwell 2023: Protecting the Legacy - Shaping the Future has been updated by the executive committee and the full SPC to reflect the Covid-related challenges we face. It is not a five-year plan as in the past, but rather a three-year plan that will provide strategic direction and structure through these volatile and variable times. This plan is comprised of four overarching goals and twelve strategies with several tactics under each strategy. Every tactic is assigned an agent of responsibility and, if needed, a funding source. The plan is inherently flexible, ensuring our ability to re-prioritize tactics as nimbly as possible under the leadership and through the lens of our new president Dr. Matthew Whelan.

Sheila N. O’Rourke, MS
Vice President for Operations and Chair, Strategic Planning Committee



Core Documents

Core Values

The core values of Caldwell University emanate from the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, the life of Saint Dominic de Guzman, the Charism of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Caldwell, and the Four Pillars of Dominican Life.

In response to St. Dominic's desire to pursue truth through education, Caldwell University commits itself to the following core values:

RESPECT

Respecting the sacred dignity of all creation, we call ourselves to have responsible relationships with each other and with the earth. We value diversity and believe it enriches the University community.

INTEGRITY

We commit ourselves to honesty and professional excellence in all interactions and relationships.

COMMUNITY

Valuing relationships, collaboration, and inclusivity, we extend this spirit through intentional connections within the campus community and beyond.

EXCELLENCE

Aware that each person has a role in creating a just and compassionate global community, we seek to develop a love for lifelong learning and a commitment to the search for knowledge, truth, and solutions to problems.

Mission Statement

Founded in 1939 by the Sisters of Saint Dominic, Caldwell University promotes intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic growth to a diverse population and welcomes all cultures and faith traditions.

Inspired by St. Dominic de Guzman and our Catholic heritage, we transform students' lives by preparing them through the liberal arts and professional studies to think critically, pursue truth, and contribute to a just society.

Vision Statement

Caldwell University will be recognized as a leader in providing transformative education addressing contemporary social, economic, and cultural challenges.

Infused by our core values, Caldwell University programs will be acknowledged for their combination of liberal arts and professionally-oriented learning.

Caldwell University will inspire its students to seek truth, embrace justice, and pursue intellectual study as they engage in experiences within a community of diverse learners. We will prepare women and men to lead successful personal and professional lives consistent with Catholic values through a liberal arts core. A broad range of programs will prepare students to be successful in the global work environment and to apply ethical standards in every aspect of their lives. Our graduates will respect the sacredness of creation and be committed to service, and intellectual life.

Our vision, shaped by our core values of Respect, Integrity, Community, and Excellence, is fostered within the framework of the 800-year tradition of the Dominican Order. This vision inspires us to be compassionate and empathetic as we develop full intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic lives.



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Institutional Goals

1. Optimize the educational experience and outcomes for every student
2. Grow the visibility, relationships, and reach of the University
3. Foster an inclusive campus environment
4. Ensure the overall financial health and stability of the University



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Institutional Goals and Strategies for Accomplishing Them

1. Optimize the educational experience and outcomes for every student

- 1.1 Advance a robust and dynamic academic culture
- 1.2 Reduce the gaps in success and satisfaction of student populations through a responsive infrastructure
- 1.3 Improve social-emotional wellbeing and workplace readiness in students through academic and co-curricular experiences

2. Grow the visibility, relationships, and reach of the University

- 2.1 Celebrate our Catholic Identity and Dominican Heritage
- 2.2 Expand corporate, public, community, and academic partnerships
- 2.3 Differentiate our value proposition from the market
- 2.4 Employ a strategic institutional approach to the pursuit of philanthropic opportunities

3. Foster an inclusive campus environment

- 3.1 Increase engagement and connectivity among campus constituents
- 3.2 Address the needs of a diverse population of students, faculty, and staff

4. Ensure the overall financial health and stability of the University

- 4.1 Implement financial and operational controls in the process of stewarding resources
- 4.2 Cultivate an innovative, mission and market-driven approach to decision-making, academic program offerings, and resource allocation
- 4.3 Secure alternative revenue streams