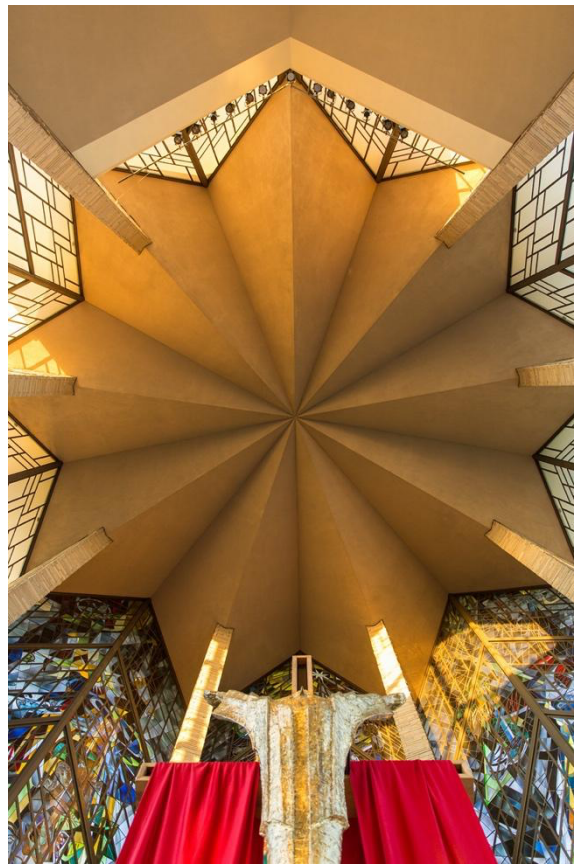


EXHIBIT A

# Uplift Valpo:

Our Beacon for the Journey Forward

## Strategic Plan



VALPARAISO  UNIVERSITY  
Learn. Serve. Lead. Thrive.

## Executive Summary

Higher education finds itself in a time of great change — change that is happening at the quickest pace since the 1960s. These changes stem from multiple different factors forcing tough conversations including demographic shifts that have been underway for a decade, changes in technology and the ways in which some students desire to learn, and a global pandemic that has fundamentally altered every aspect of society.

Students are pre-eminently concerned with the affordability of obtaining a degree and are intensely focused on their outcome (employability in their chosen field) in making a choice of where to go to college or whether they should even go at all.

The challenges facing higher education are acutely felt at tuition-dependent institutions, especially in the Northeast and Midwest. In these regions, the traditional students they have served are diminishing greatly in number and the growing populations are all within communities that have not traditionally gone to college in the same rate, many of whom would be first-generation college students and largely don't have the same socioeconomic advantages to be able to afford to pay for a private college education. Therefore, the market is leading us to change.

As a Lutheran University, we will value each person's calling in the way that we teach, providing opportunities to grow as both servants and leaders through reflection and action. We will be a community of hope, letting the light shine through us as beacons for the world to see.

We believe that God is calling Valparaiso University to continue the work of our founders by making a life-changing education accessible to all those who want to live a life of purpose dedicated to loving our neighbors. We are called to prepare students to lead and serve in church and society. This grounding in the Lutheran tradition is a fundamental feature of the institution forming an unbreakable foundation that enables a robust freedom of inquiry to unlock the mysteries of the world and its inhabitants while simultaneously helping all of its constituents to identify their calling and work to meet the world's greatest needs. Valpo students will learn to make a living and a life that matters.

To ensure the current and future success of this University, the past year has been spent thinking strategically about the future of the institution and the communities we serve and developing concrete initiatives forming the corpus of our next strategic plan. The process to get to this plan involved a full collaboration of University constituents including the administration, faculty, staff, and Board of Directors. In addition, critical

insights were also gathered from current students and alumni to help inform these critical actions that will move the institution from surviving to thriving. In sum, the proposed initiatives are a key step toward revolutionizing campus and the curriculum with an intentional focus of keeping students at the center of everything we do.

The first theme of the strategic plan is **LEARN**. The institution is committed to creating an unparalleled learning experience for students that is nationally recognized for its excellent teaching, experiential learning, and demonstrated career outcomes. To accomplish this, we are committed to increasing the flexibility of the curriculum to meet the needs of students today and tomorrow. This will require an aggressive focus on a general education curriculum, including a reimagined first-year experience, that drives innovation and intentionally weaves leadership, service, and practice throughout all that we do. Additionally, at a time when problems facing the world and society become more complex, it is imperative to bring expertise from multiple disciplines together; by creating a center for interdisciplinary and problem-based learning, we'll unlock the power of innovation throughout the curriculum, leading to cutting-edge programs and increased flexibility to meet the needs of students as those needs evolve. By thoughtfully expanding into the online space in a way that meets a market need and an educational opportunity that we can fill, we'll enable the reach of a Valpo education to expand farther than ever before. Finally, an intentional focus on the core of a liberal arts education (the arts and humanities) will be undertaken to not only be force multipliers for STEM students, but to ensure the liberal arts foundation of this institution remains strong and vibrant into the foreseeable future.

The second theme of the strategic plan is **SERVE**. Service is at the center of what we do. We prepare students for lives of service—lives shaped by a sense of calling, equipped for thoughtful reflection, engaged in the larger world, and responsive to its deepest challenges (Valparaiso University Institute for Leadership and Service). To accomplish this, we are committed to making students the center of why and how we do what we do, meeting them where they are and developing their skills and confidence to go out into their communities to leave their positive impact on the world. This includes offering traditional and non-traditional students alternate paths and support through the Valpo Success Initiative and its two-year access college, as well as the summer Bloom program. Additionally, Valparaiso University plans to continue the work approved in the "Action Agenda for Racial Equity and Inclusion". This will require the institution to better represent the society we serve, collaborate and improve our relationship with the community where we reside, and tackle the challenge of environmental sustainability.

The third theme of this strategic plan is **LEAD**. Beacons lead by example. Our graduates are sought after for their knowledge, character, integrity, and wisdom. That translates into thoughtful, compassionate, and ethical leaders ready to take on the challenges of a complex global world. To accomplish this, we are committed to intentionally integrating leadership throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum so that every student is able to develop as a servant leader within the communities in which they reside. This idea of leadership goes well beyond the notion of positional leadership to incorporate the many ways individuals can demonstrate their commitment and actions to reach a shared mission. Athletics is a prime example of co-curricular leadership development and this plan outlines our continued investment in NCAA Division I athletics by ensuring competitive facilities and a mix of programs to positively impact the University and surrounding community. In addition, developing servant leaders requires a solid partnership between the Career Center and our alumni to help prepare our current students for future success. Finally, we are committed to being a partner for our alumni as they navigate their careers in an ever-changing world and the knowledge and skills needed thrive.

The fourth theme of the strategic plan is **THRIVE**. Living out lives of faith and service, we thrive in our calling to serve in society. We strive to lead meaningful lives as individuals and work toward a better world in the communities and regions we impact. A thriving institution flourishes in its operations and finances and is a driving economic force in the region. To accomplish this, we are committed to caring and investing in the faculty and staff of the University who make the exceptional education of our students possible. To do this, we must be able to clearly define who we are to all of our constituencies. Ultimately, we must align the University to be the appropriate size given the current dynamics of the higher education market, work to better retain all students who are committed to learning, and better reflect the demographics of the regions we serve. Demographics show that Latinos are not heading off a cliff and therefore compel us to seek being a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). We also require the right facilities to optimize our ability to attract and retain the best students and athletes, particularly for the College of Nursing and Health Professions, our residential spaces, and athletics facilities. We must also organize and properly resource our operations and academics to ensure the best success of this plan and the future of the University. Finally, none of this is possible without operating within a sustainable budget model, using appropriate data to make well-informed mission-driven decisions that can transform our collective work.

Our plan also commits to continuing the work approved in the "Action Agenda for Racial Equity and Inclusion." The Agenda's commitments to justice and equity in

student and faculty recruitment, retention, and success; diversification of curriculum and promotion of inclusive programming; community engagement; and inspirational leadership are prioritized throughout the four themes of our plan.

The scope of the work outlined in the strategic plan is quite large and represents a combination of bold new initiatives and operational imperatives that are closely tied to the daily work of the institution. The institution will not be able to tackle and accomplish all of these efforts simultaneously – a key element to the success of our plan will be to appropriately prioritize and sequence the work. This prioritization and sequencing will be an ongoing activity for the administration and the strategic plan implementation team. As we monitor our progress amidst a volatile and changing landscape, we can redirect our emphasis as necessary to achieve the goals that we have laid forward in the plan.

Through the many bold initiatives and numerous operational imperatives contained with the strategic plan we can achieve the desired future for Valparaiso University: A financially stable Lutheran University responding flexibly to the evolving challenges of higher education. Working together to Learn, Serve, Lead, and Thrive we can Uplift Valpo to be a beacon of light for the world for generations to come.

Jose Padilla, University President

Kevin Goebbert, Executive Director of Strategic Planning

Joseph Bognar, Strategic Planning Committee Chair

## Strategic Plan Goals

### Academics

1. By the end of the Strategic Plan, experiential and service learning will be an integral and accessible part of a Valpo education for all students.
2. By the end of the Strategic Plan, an innovative and forward-looking general education will be built to ensure all students complete service learning and servant leadership. The curriculum will intentionally and specifically include leadership and service through both theory and practice.
3. By the end of the Strategic Plan, the University will be an emerging leader in cross-disciplinary and problem-based learning, enabling the innovation of degree programs to meet the needs of society by preparing students to be bridge builders and translators across areas of knowledge.
4. By the end of the Strategic Plan, Valpo will have a distinct presence within the online education space meeting the needs of those students in the same way we have traditionally done for residential students.
5. The University shall evaluate constructing a building for the College of Nursing and Health Professions ("CONHP") in which the college can house all its programs and operations. The University shall give equal consideration to constructing this new building on either the main campus or on an off-campus site in the region with a smaller venue to support the college where the main building is not located.
6. The University shall create and implement a two-year associate's degree directed toward students who are first generation, low income and/or from underrepresented groups. Graduates of this program may advance to baccalaureate programs at the University, provided they meet minimum standards. As part of the Strategic Plan, the University will evaluate a proper location to house the program.
7. The University will intentionally focus on the core of the liberal arts education (Music, Arts and Humanities) to not only be a force multiplier for STEM students, but to ensure the liberal arts foundation of the institution remains strong and vibrant.

## **Student Life**

1. The University shall increase external conference gross revenue to \$1M by the end of the strategic plan.
2. The University shall work toward and, if possible, renovate an existing freshman residence hall by, for example, creating state-of-the-art, suite-style rooms attractive to students considering Valparaiso University.
3. The University shall merge the Office of Alumni Engagement and the Center for Career and Professional Development, in order to provide affinity, career placement, career advice and other programming to Valpo undergraduates and alumni. In providing career programming, the merged offices shall coordinate with the Office of the Provost, and do the following: actively reach out and consult with regional employers on their workforce needs; and provide online and other academic and professional education programming to alumni.

## **Athletics**

1. Through philanthropy and sponsorships, the University shall evaluate the construction of a new athletic complex that incorporates Brown Field and the old hospital property.
2. By the end of the strategic plan, the University shall assess and implement board-approved changes to the mix of athletic programs. The proposal for such changes will consider the profitability and overall enrollment implications of adding or removing any individual program.

## **Enrollment**

1. Develop specific strategies for recruitment of students from Christian (and specifically Lutheran) secondary schools across the United States.
2. Responding to opportunities in light of demographic changes, by the end of the Strategic Plan, the University shall aspire to achieve status as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).
3. By the end of the Strategic Plan, the Office of Enrollment Management and Marketing shall phase in an increase of the net tuition revenue per student by 10% .

4. By the end of the Strategic Plan, the Office of Enrollment Management and Marketing shall increase the yield rate of accepted freshmen and transfer students by 10 percentage points in conjunction with an external study informing the appropriate target for the size of the undergraduate population in light of the evolving higher education market.

### **Budget/Alternative Revenue**

1. AVRO shall enter into contracts or agreements to either sell — or be equity-partners in developing — all non-core property, which remains after approval of the strategic plan. This will be in order to support the operations of the University or to fund the quasi endowment.
2. By the end of the Strategic Plan, the University will be implementing the developed compensation philosophy and will have greatly reduced the liability that has accrued in attracting and retaining talented faculty and staff over many decades.
3. By the end of this Strategic Plan, the University will have a fiscally strong, sustainable budget and be cash positive.
4. As part of the Strategic Plan, the University will work toward organizing and properly resourcing our operations and academics to ensure the best success of this plan and the future of the institution.