GEORGIA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

2024-2029 Strategic Plan

August 2024

Contents

Introduction

Over the last three decades, Georgia Central University has grown in significant ways. What began as a small Bible institute has developed into a university consisting of five schools focusing on fields of study that include business, Christianity, computer science, music, theology, and sports science. While all the aspects of the institution have expanded, the founding vision of building an institution of biblical higher education dedicated to training men and women to serve the church and transform society worldwide remains the same. To improve the work of advancing this vision, the university engages in strategic planning as a process of identifying new and evolving opportunities and challenges and articulating the most important ways of responding to the changing environment.

Mission Statement

Georgia Central University inspires and prepares students for Christian leadership and professional careers in the global community.

Planning Process

Strategic planning at Georgia Central University aims at developing a 5-year strategic plan that articulates the most important ways of responding to the changing environment in which the university operates. Strategic planning is a university-wide process facilitated by a committee consisting of academic and administrative leaders. The work of the strategic planning committee includes:

1. Identify key stakeholders and develop a plan to engage them in the process.
2. Review enrollment trends, financial resources, demographic shifts, and other relevant developments.
3. Perform a SWOT analysis to articulate the university's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
4. Review and possibly revise the mission statement in light of the analysis.
5. Develop strategic goals and objectives that are aligned with the mission, ensuring that they are specific, measurable, and achievable.
6. Define practical actions needed to achieve each objective; determine the key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress and success; and determine human and financial resources needed.

SWOT Analysis

This analysis of Georgia Central University's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) was conducted as part of the strategic planning process in spring 2024. The Strategic Planning Committee solicited feedback from faculty, staff, students, and alumni and organized a wide range of perceptions into categories. This SWOT analysis represents the Committee's reflections on frequently occurring categories and provides a context for the development of strategic priorities for the next five years.

Internal Strengths

Campus Location and Facilities

Our location in the Atlanta metropolitan area enables the university to engage the region's growing Korean community as well as other ethnic communities. Our current facilities are sufficient to meet current space needs and to accommodate new academic programs and student services.

Diversity of Academic Programs

GCU has a variety of academic programming that adequately prepares students for careers in a wide range of fields including business, computer science, ministry, music, and sports science. GCU has the capacity to further diversify academic programming to meet growing student and community demands.

Diversity of Student Population

The university's student population has become increasingly diverse in recent years, and the university has a vision to continue to seek and serve more students from diverse age groups and diverse cultural backgrounds to create a rich environment for developing global leaders. It has resources to support the growth in the international student population.

Affordable Cost of Education

Our university is one of the least expensive institutions of higher education, making it an attractive choice for those seeking affordable, high-quality education. There is a consensus among faculty and staff that we must make a college education accessible and affordable to fulfill our mission.

Commitment of Faculty and Staff

GCU faculty and staff have consistently demonstrated a high level of commitment to the university's mission and student success. Our dedicated, highly qualified, and experienced employees are the lifeblood of the university, being responsible for carrying out its mission.

Healthy Shared Governance

GCU maintains stable institutional leadership and healthy shared governance necessary to fulfill its mission. Academic and administrative leaders have successfully forged a spirit of collegiality and effective teamwork in addressing major issues. Stable leadership and open communication are evident at all levels.

Local and Global Engagement

The university continues to facilitate partnerships and events to increase its local and global presence. The university maintains strong educational collaborations with church organizations (i.e., KAPC, Full Gospel Church), mission networks, and similar educational institutions. Faculty have regularly engaged with local communities in a variety of ways.

Internal Weaknesses

Limited Financial Resources

Student tuition and individual and institutional contributions comprise approximately 55% and 40%, respectively, of the operating budget. The university must increase its effort to diversify revenue streams to generate sufficient funds to improve and expand educational programs, student services, and physical and technological infrastructures.

Unpredictable Student Enrollment

The overall student enrollment has fluctuated over the years, placing substantial strain on the university's financial resources. The university's strategic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain students have not yet produced the expected effect. In particular, administrative and academic leaders will have to develop new and better ways to retain and graduate a greater portion of enrolled students.

Weak Recognition and Visibility

Recognition and visibility of the university outside Atlanta is weak. The university's efforts to increase its national and international presence and visibility via print and social media have been inconsistent. Academic and administrative leaders will need to work together to tell the mission and story of the university more effectively and more persistently.

Limited Human Resources

Although our faculty are dedicated and highly qualified, the number and diversity of faculty vary from school to school within the university. For example, the School of Divinity needs to include more women faculty members, while the Schools of Business Management and Computer Science will have to increase the number of core faculty. Similarly, more staff members will be required to improve student services.

Limited Student Financial Aid

The university's participation in federal student aid programs has not been finalized yet. The cost of attendance is low at our university and many of our students receive scholarships and tuition discounts, but a more robust financial aid program will be required to increase the number and quality of entering students.

External Opportunities

High Demand Programs

The university has an opportunity to build on its strengths – faculty and staff, programs, and partnerships – to reach more diverse learner segments. We must place more emphasis on our existing programs in business management and computer science as they are among the most popular disciplines in higher education – as well as explore strategies to create more high demand degree and certificate programs (e.g., nursing).

Growing Korean Community

The Korean population in the Atlanta metropolitan area is over 150,000 and is still growing. In fact, the region is home to the fastest-growing Korean community in the nation. GCU is well situated to serve the local ethnic community and has resources to meet its diverse educational needs. The university should continue to develop such creative, collaborative projects as the Compelling Preaching Program.

Global Landscape of Education

The landscape of higher education is becoming increasingly global. GCU's new mission statement with its focus on global Christian leadership reflects this new reality. We have an opportunity to connect with learners around the world, explore globally-oriented research and curriculum, and build international educational partnerships.

Enhanced Alumni Involvement

The growing number of GCU graduates constitutes an opportunity. Many of them have the ability to give back to the community of learning and faith that was partially responsible for preparing them for life's journey. We need to explore creative ways to involve alumni in the life of this community, particularly in expanding GCU's presence and visibility in local and global contexts and in strengthening its financial resources.

External Threats

Changing Student Preferences

It is commonly accepted that fewer people are seeking higher education. Enrollments have been declining, a national trend accelerated by the pandemic. It signals changing student

preferences. A college degree has become just one of the pathways to good careers and more students are choosing alternative, marketable credentials.

Competition from Other Schools

Reports indicate that increasing competition with other educational institutions is a major concern for many college and university leaders. Our university too faces stiff competition, particularly from other Korean-serving institutions and programs based in Atlanta and other regions. Expansive online education accelerates the competition in student recruitment.

Rapid Technological Change

The digital revolution is transforming how students learn, how professors teach, and how universities operate. The technology-driven transformation in higher education presents challenges to small schools like ours. It is expensive to invest in new technologies and IT staff. Also, the process of adapting to, integrating, and managing them can be challenging.

Goals and Objectives

Guided by the GCU mission and informed by the SWOT analysis, the strategic planning committee identified six strategic goals that serve as the backbone of the strategic plan. These goals are interconnected and address critical aspects of the university's future. The committee also articulated several objectives for each goal to give direction on what we want to achieve.

- **Expand academic programs**: We will create high demand degree and certificate programs while strengthening the core degree programs.

- **Strengthen faculty and staff**: We will develop and enhance systems and programs that support faculty and staff development, diversity, and well-being.

- **Improve student enrollment**: We will achieve a student enrollment that ensures long-term institutional viability and active teaching and learning.

- **Enhance student services**: We will expand and enhance student services to meet the individual needs of students with diverse backgrounds.

- **Strengthen financial resources**: We will achieve financial stability by instituting a more efficient budget model and diversifying revenue streams.

- **Expand community engagement**: We will expand the engagement of faculty, staff, students, and alumni with local and global supporters and partners.

Goal 1. Expand Academic Programs

We will create high demand degree and certificate programs while strengthening the core degree programs.

Objective 1.1	Develop new, high demand academic programs that support the GCU mission and the needs of students and community.
Objective 1.2	Use assessment data to improve existing academic programs that are central to GCU's founding vision and Christian identity.
Objective 1.3	Provide high quality online education that empowers learners from diverse backgrounds to achieve their professional goals.

Goal 2. Strengthen Faculty and Staff

We will develop and enhance systems and programs that support faculty and staff development, diversity, and well-being.

Objective 2.1	Enhance recruitment practices to attract and orient qualified and motivated faculty and staff with special focus on diversity and the needs of our individual schools.
Objective 2.2	Cultivate a respectful, supportive culture for our dedicated faculty and staff that recognizes and rewards excellence and that provides opportunities for professional development and leadership.
Objective 2.3	Create an organizational structure that offers adaptability to changing conditions and priorities and creates an environment in which every faculty member and every staff member can thrive.

Goal 3. Improve Student Enrollment

We will achieve a student enrollment that ensures long-term institutional viability and active teaching and learning.

Objective 3.1	Develop, implement, assess, and improve enrollment and retention strategies at the institutional, school and program levels.
Objective 3.2	Strengthen and leverage our distinctive identity as a Christian university that combines biblical and professional education with global awareness and engagement.

Goal 4. Enhance Student Services

We will expand and enhance student services to meet the individual needs of students with diverse backgrounds.

Objective 4.1	Using assessment data, continue to improve student services to ensure their impact on a diversity of student groups including online and adult learners.
Objective 4.2	Increase leadership development opportunities, which challenge students to build the skills needed to be leaders in local and global settings.
Objective 4.3	Develop strategies to maximize sources of student funding at the institutional and school levels.

Goal 5. Strengthen Financial Resources

We will achieve financial stability by instituting a more efficient budget model and diversifying revenue streams.

Objective 5.1	Seek new sources of revenue that provide funding diversification and create opportunities for our students, faculty, and partners.
Objective 5.2	Evaluate and redesign GCU's budget model that is both transparent and strategic with broad stakeholder involvement.

Goal 6. Expand Community Engagement

We will expand the engagement of faculty, staff, students, and alumni with local and global supporters and partners.

Objective 6.1	Expand opportunities for faculty, staff, and students for scholarly professional, and cultural collaborations with external partners.
Objective 6.2	Explore creative ways to involve more alumni in expanding GCU's local and global presence and achieving financial viability.

Action Plan

The six strategic goals in this plan are supported by objectives, which in turn are supported by concrete action steps at the tactical level. Each action specifies performance metrics and who is ultimately responsible for overseeing successful performance and completion. We will implement actionable initiatives to bring the objectives to fruition in individual units and at the school and institutional levels.

Objective 1.1

Develop new, high demand academic programs that support the GCU mission and the needs of students and community.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Study feasibility of new programs in nursing and other popular fields.	Feasibility studies	Director of Institutional Effectiveness
Research growing fields, high demand degrees, and marketable skills.	Job market and salary data	Director of Institutional Effectiveness

Objective 1.2

Use assessment data to improve existing academic programs that are central to GCU's founding vision and Christian identity.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Initiate accreditation process for our School of Music.	NASM application and self-study	SOM Dean
Improve Bible and Theology curriculum to reflect GCU mission and student needs.	Learning outcomes and syllabi	Academic Affairs VP

Objective 1.3

Provide high quality online education that empowers learners from diverse backgrounds to achieve their professional goals.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Develop a process to research and share best practices in online education.	Research presentations	Distance Education Director
Invest in the infrastructure needed for the delivery of high quality online education.	Faculty and student needs analysis	Distance Education Director
Evaluate and enhance student learning and success in the online environment.	Learning outcomes and satisfaction data	Distance Education Director

Objective 2.1

Enhance recruitment practices to attract and orient qualified and motivated faculty and staff with special focus on diversity and the needs of our individual schools.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Develop hiring practices that are effective in attracting a diverse pool of applicants.	Implementation of innovative practices	Academic Affairs VP
Increase full-time faculty of our Schools of Business and Computer Science.	Number of full-time faculty	Academic Affairs VP

Objective 2.2

Cultivate a respectful, supportive culture for our dedicated faculty and staff that recognizes excellence and that provides opportunities for professional development and leadership.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Find ways to make our compensation and benefits packages more competitive.	salary study and a new salary structure	President
Maximize opportunities to celebrate our faculty and staff's achievements.	Comprehensive rewards and recognition program	Academic Affairs VP
Engage faculty and staff to gather input on our professional development program.	Faculty and staff survey	Academic Affairs VP

Objective 2.3

Create an organizational structure that offers adaptability to changing conditions and priorities and creates an environment in which every faculty member and every staff member can thrive.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Engage faculty and staff to gather input on improving GCU's organizational structure.	Focus groups	Director of Institutional Effectiveness
Improve university's overall performance through organization redesign.	New organizational structure	Director of Institutional Effectiveness

Objective 3.1

Develop, implement, assess, and improve enrollment and retention strategies at the institutional, school and program levels.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Increase on- and off-campus recruitment events and faculty involvement.	New events, level of faculty participation	Admissions Director
Maximize email, social media and website to connect with prospective students.	Communication and interaction data	Admissions Director
Evaluate and amend methods of identifying and assisting at-risk students.	Data on at-risk students and Interventions	Associate Director of Academic Affairs

Objective 3.2

Strengthen and leverage our distinctive identity as a Christian university that combines biblical and professional education with global awareness and engagement.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Promote a shared understanding of the GCU identity among internal constituents.	Internally focused activities	External Affairs VP
Expand opportunities to promote the GCU identity among external constituents.	Externally focused activities	External Affairs VP

Objective 4.1

Using assessment data, continue to improve student services to ensure their impact on a diversity of student groups including online and adult learners.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Increase students' awareness of and participation in the existing services.	Participation and satisfaction data	Student Affairs Director
Develop new services based on the needs of diverse student groups.	Focus groups	Student Affairs Director

Objective 4.2

Increase leadership development opportunities, which challenge students to build the skills needed to be leaders in local and global settings.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Develop more opportunities for students to develop competence on global issues.	Global competence assessment	Student Affairs Director
Create services abroad to allow students to develop leadership and cultural skills.	Data on student learning	Student Affairs Director

Objective 4.3

Develop strategies to maximize sources of student funding at the institutional and school levels.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Identify and engage donors to develop funding for student scholarships.	Donor solicitation efforts and results	Student Affairs Director
Engage external partners to create on-site internship opportunities for our students.	Access to a diversity of internships	Student Affairs Director
Successfully complete application for federal and state financial aid programs.	Approval for initial participation	Business Affairs Director

Objective 5.1

Seek new sources of revenue that provide funding diversification and create opportunities for our students, faculty, and partners.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Achieve higher, sustained annual giving to fund projects including endowed chairs.	Growth in dollars and donors	External Affairs VP
Maximize support from local government, foundations, and corporations to launch community-based educational projects.	Inventory of grants and contracts	Director of Institutional Effectiveness

Objective 5.2

Evaluate and redesign GCU's budget model that is both transparent and strategic with broad stakeholder involvement.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Develop a budget model that allows us to maximize transparency and performance and pursue strategic priorities.	New budget model	Business Affairs Director

Objective 6.1

Expand opportunities for our faculty, staff, and students for scholarly, professional, and cultural collaborations with external partners.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Expand educational collaborations with church and missionary networks and theological institutions.	Outcomes reports	School of Divinity Dean
Collaborate with partners to engage our music faculty and students in public performances and educational outreach.	Outcomes reports	School of Music Dean

Objective 6.2

Explore creative ways to involve more alumni in expanding GCU's local and global presence and achieving financial viability.

Action	Metrics	Responsibility
Attract more alumni to engagement in our campus, regional, and global activities.	Alumni participation data	External Affairs VP
Engage school deans in aggressive efforts to increase alumni giving.	Alumni giving data	Business Affairs Director, deans