

EMU Vision, Strategic Direction & 3-Year Priorities (2020-23)

A new EMU vision statement was approved by the board of trustees in November 2019. This document articulates in more specific terms the university's strategic direction in the coming years. It synthesizes our aspirations with specific ideas and goals gathered from the campus community. It provides a roadmap for the university's more detailed strategic plans as it enters its second century.

Developed by the Strategic Planning Task Force

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LEAD TOGETHER

Our Context

Embracing an Environment of Significant Change

As EMU begins its second century, we take sustenance from our past even as we confront a volatile contractionary environment. The headwinds we face, which batter the entire private higher education sector, demand nothing less than bold innovative re-imagination. We must re-examine who we serve, why we matter, and how we can eradicate barriers of access and affordability to open new pathways of achievement for more students.

The changes we face are considerable. We anticipate declining numbers and increasing diversity of college-bound high school graduates who will arrive on campuses with more and increasingly varied needs for support. The economics of higher education are in flux, as tuition costs rise faster than family incomes and governments explore low-cost or free enrollment options through community college systems. Increasing social and political polarization challenge openness to diverse perspectives, and we observe a growing suspicion of the value of liberal arts education and the relevance of colleges with denominational markers in their names.

We recognize these new contextual forces have a profound impact on our university and that “business as usual” is not an option. Hence, we emphasize the urgency with which we must change in order to live out our sustaining values and mission with renewed vigor. We must reinvent ourselves around dynamic principles of adaptability and flexibility that put students at the center of our enterprise. We are committed to seizing the opportunity of these next several years to reinvent, reimagine, and reposition EMU for its second century.

As we identify and embrace the adaptive change this moment calls for, we will discover anew the call of our enduring aspirations: To prepare students to “serve and lead in a global context” in the spirit of Micah 6:8, striving to “*do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.*”

Our Calling

Inspiring Bridge Building Leaders

We believe the learning community we create, rooted in our Anabaptist values, represents a counter-cultural response to the world in which we live. The changes and challenges we face require fresh thinking about our role in our communities and our world. As followers of Jesus, we are called to appreciate, celebrate, listen and give voice to all who walk through our doors. We know that our learning is enriched when it embraces the diversity of creation. In all that we do, inside and outside of the classroom, we seek to live out the values of our faith to inspire and prepare the next generation of bridge-building leaders.

Our motto, *Lead Together*, captures in shorthand our values and ethos. It presents a creative tension congruent with an Anabaptist “third way,” bringing into counterintuitive alignment bold leadership and collaborative community. *Lead Together* signals a path forward toward the kind of success that truly matters in our often highly fractured and polarized world. It is an expression of our unique value proposition, well positioned for our times. Most importantly, *Lead Together* will be brought to life by our alumni, students, faculty and staff who are adept problem solvers, know how to engage difference constructively and can “*serve and lead in a global context.*”

Our Vision

We will open new pathways of access and achievement for all students who aspire to grow as unifying leaders equipped with intercultural competence, oriented toward peace and justice, and rooted in an active faith modeled on the life and teachings of Jesus.

Our Compass

Preparing to Pivot

Amidst this maze of changes, EMU maintains its foundational and enduring commitments. Our mission, our values and our Life Together commitments reflect deeply-held beliefs about who we are and what we will be. **These commitments will not change.** Indeed, it is these very commitments that orient us as we look to thrive in times of shifting paradigms.

At the same time, the most successful organizations who navigate changing environments are prepared to pivot. We know that as in the game of basketball our “plant foot” must remain firmly fixed on mission and values (If not, we will have committed an infraction of our “game”). The other “foot,” however, can move in various nimble and smart directions. Our moorings--our “plant foot” give us sustenance from our past, authenticity to embrace our present circumstances, and strength to pursue new “outlet passes” for growth and success.

MISSION

EMU prepares students to serve and lead in a global context.

Our community of learning integrates Christian faith, academic rigor, artistic creation and reflective practice informed by the liberal arts, interdisciplinary engagement and cross-cultural encounter.

GUIDING SCRIPTURE

EMU elevates its learning community to “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8).

VALUES

EMU’s mission and vision are grounded in the enduring Biblical values of Christian discipleship, community, service and peace.

These values are embodied throughout the university in our distinctive commitment to peacebuilding, social justice, cross-cultural engagement and sustainability. Rooted in the Anabaptist tradition, we follow Jesus’s call to bear witness to truth, serve with compassion, and walk boldly in the way of nonviolence and peace.

LIFE TOGETHER: COMMITMENTS FOR A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING¹

At EMU our life together supports our work, and in turn, our work shapes our life together. The following ideals describe the learning community we aspire to be:

Love for God and one another: Our most important work is to love as God loves us, as shown in the life of Jesus.

Wisdom: Our learning community pursues truth and seeks wisdom in its practice. We commit ourselves to intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth in all aspects of academic and social life.

Equality: Because each person has immeasurable worth in God’s eyes, we value participatory processes and pedagogies.

Sustainability: We strive to use God’s gifts wisely and generously, emphasizing well-being and supporting policies that enable students and employees to live balanced lives.

Accountability: Our individual and collective actions affect the health of the entire community. We commit ourselves to mutual accountability motivated by love in a spirit of generosity and grace.

¹Full document available at emu.edu/about/life-together

Our Student-Centered Changes

Creating Pathways of Access and Achievement for All Students

Our vision statement calls us to open new pathways of access and achievement for all students. This idea, while seemingly straightforward, in fact represents a significant change in both who our students are and how we engage with them.

Growing Our Offerings and Student Body

In the future, more students will be able to learn at EMU through opportunities that extend beyond our traditional, residential undergraduate programs. Further, our programs themselves will adapt to the demands and opportunities of our students' communities and contexts.

Our students will find new and convenient, customizable program options that extend beyond the traditional four-year residential undergraduate program. Working professionals and executives will find new and meaningful training and development offerings--rooted in EMU's strengths--that align with their needs and interests.

In order to facilitate their achievement at EMU and beyond, students will have more opportunities to integrate applied learning (e.g., internships, co-op programs) into their education in order to be well-prepared for their careers and further study.

In the face of rapidly rising costs of higher education, students will have access to increased financial aid and will find EMU offerings at a wider variety of price points. In addition, we must carefully manage costs in stewardship of our students' own financial contributions to their education.

Engaging and Celebrating Diversity

To fully live out our values and mission, we must reimagine our university through the eyes of our increasingly diverse student body—meeting our students where they are, and valuing the contributions they make to our learning community. As we pivot from our history as a predominantly white institution, we strive to extend the richness of the EMU experience to students who may have found themselves at the margins in the past.

In our second century, all students will experience EMU as a supportive, diverse and inclusive community. They will see in our faculty and staff a diverse community of teachers, mentors and fellow learners who support them in achieving their goals.

We will work in new ways to ensure that all students understand the Anabaptist values and beliefs that underpin our educational model. We strive to model these values and beliefs as faculty and staff, and we will find new ways to integrate them into our curricula and our co-curriculum.

During their time with us all students will feel a strong connection and sense of belonging to the EMU community. All students will find at EMU a community that energetically celebrates individual and collective successes as well as its shared identity.

Our Capacity

Investing Responsibly in our Future

New pathways require new investments. Our success requires new organizational and individual capacities, change in organizational culture, new structures, and new resources. In pivoting toward new opportunities, we affirm courageous leadership that champions risk, innovation, and fiscal prudence.

To these ends, we commit to investments in our staff and faculty. We will build our collective capacity to promote equity and inclusion and live into our Life Together commitments more fully. This work includes specific investments in instructional development to build capacity for teaching and supporting an increasingly diverse student body.

As an academically rigorous Christian liberal arts university we will invest in strengthened outreach and marketing to extend awareness of EMU's distinctive faith-informed educational experiences and academic excellence. We will also partner with other organizations in strategic ways, with a particular focus on new connections in our city and region. Further, we will continue to seek meaningful church partnerships within the global Anabaptist community and beyond.

We recognize the importance of environmental sustainability as we look to the future, naming how our practices impact God's creation and our own institutional viability. We commit to strengthening our care for God's creation by increasing sustainable practices and enhancing our knowledge, values, and actions. As a university renowned internationally for our justice and peacebuilding work, we are especially well-positioned to lead more intentionally on climate justice.

Finally, we will invest in EMU's viability for future generations by establishing practices that foster strategic growth and fiscal responsibility. We place our students at the center as we transform learning for our future, recognizing that affordable and excellent education will require reallocation of resources, vigilant attention to optimization in our operations, and, ultimately, the ability to consistently achieve a positive operating margin.

As we move forward with careful attention to stewardship of our existing resources, we will also attract new investments for innovation and significantly grow our endowment to enhance revenues. We are eager to launch the university's first comprehensive campaign that engages our alumni and friends in our noble mission and bold vision.

We look ahead with confidence in the significance of our calling, anchored by our mission and values, and pivoting toward new possibilities.

Our future beckons!

Three-Year Strategic Priorities

Celebrate

Celebrate and promote our unique identity as an academically rigorous Christian liberal arts university, strengthening our identity in the communities we serve.

- C1. Promote and elevate EMU's brand and values on- and off-campus, building the university's reputation
- C2. Strengthen school spirit, launching new community rituals and celebrations to foster community and highlight our successes
- C3. Increase local visibility

Diversify

Reimagine our university through the eyes of our increasingly diverse student body—meeting our students where they are, and valuing the contributions they make to our learning community.

- D1. Invest in ways to increase the sense of belonging among all students, building an invitational community of communities with permeable boundaries
- D2. Reimagine support processes for a student population that is more diverse across multiple dimensions (demographics, age, motivation for study, modality, etc.)
- D3. Diversify our faculty/staff
- D4. Support faculty development to implement student-centered pedagogies; aid faculty in teaching to an increasingly diverse student body

Grow

Enhance our program offerings and grow our student body.

- G1. Refresh/repackage existing curriculum to align with student interest (incorporate customization as appropriate) and build on EMU strengths and distinctives
- G2. Expand program offerings for "post-traditional" students (accelerated, graduate), non-credit (prof. dev., camps) and better applied learning opportunities (internships for all) based on EMU strengths and distinctives
- G3. Increase access and affordability, enhancing financial aid and offering programs at varying price points
- G4. Ensure financial strength through increased enrollments and vigilant attention to optimization (e.g. student/faculty and student/staff ratios) in our operations, consistently achieving a positive operating margin

Engage

Engage in new ways and with new partners to achieve our mission, vision and brand.

- E1. Focus on new employee and organizational capacities and structures to achieve our student-centered goals
- E2. Invest in strategic partnerships to improve program offerings, increase efficiency, and strengthen the university
- E3. Renew our commitment to sustainability in visible ways
- E4. Secure new resources through a comprehensive campaign that engages our alumni, parents, and friends to advance our shared mission