**Strategic Plan 2024-2029**

**NOBTS and Leavell College**

***Goal 1:* Student Cultivation: Increase quality and quantity of graduating students**

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| **Measures (means of assessment)** | **Criteria for Success (benchmark based on current data)** | **Results (report, summarize, reflect)** | **Use of Results (make action plan to reach criteria, set new criteria if needed, AND discuss success of previous cycle’s action plans)** |
| ***Sub-goal 1.1*: Student Success—Move students from matriculation to graduation.\*** | | | |
| Increase and maintain undergraduate fall *graduation* rates to 35% | 8-year rate  **26%** | In 2023-24, the fall graduation rate for undergrad was **55%**. However, this number fluctuates greatly depending upon our prison cohorts. Their graduation rates tend to be high. So, while we celebrate this increase, we will continue to implement strategies to keep this number high. | **Create and implement degree plans for undergrad students** – A master degree plan was created for undergraduate students. This plan was piloted with students starting Spring 2024. We will continue to improve and implement these.  **New Strategy**: Complete and fully implement degree plans for undergraduate students. |
| **Require advising for freshmen and sophomore students while encouraging it for upper classmen** – This seemed to work well, and we will continue to monitor it.  **New Strategy**: We realized that many of the BA+ students need advising beyond their sophomore year. Therefore, students in these programs are required to get advising each semester before registering. |
| Increase and maintain MDiv fall *graduation* rates to 60% | 6-year rate  **56%** | In 2023-24, the fall graduation rate for the MDiv was **47%**. While it can be hard to determine why this number changes, our best guess is that Covid which hit right in the middle of the 2018-2024 cohort was a major factor. We are not surprised to see this number decrease. | **Increase the number of MDiv students receiving advising** – In 2022-23, we advised 197 MDiv students. In 2023-24, 489 MDiv students received advising from the registrar’s office. That is an increase of 148%. We will continue to work to increase the number of MDiv students receiving advising in the coming year. |
| **Continue work on developing degree plans for the MDiv** – The degree plans for the MDiv are developed. They are not yet ready to be implemented, but we will do so for the Spring 25 semester.  **New Strategy**: Complete and fully implement the degree plans for the MDiv. |
| Increase and maintain MA fall *graduation* rates to 70% | 4-year rate last three years (**55%, 67%, and 73%**) | In 2023-24, the fall graduation rate for the MA degrees was **55%**. This number reflects a drop off from what we have seen the last two years. The 2024 cohort began the year of covid, so we think this may have been a factor. | **Increase the number of MA students receiving advising** - In 2022-23, we advised 211 MA students. In 2023-24, 489 MA students received advising from the registrar’s office. That is an increase of 132%. We will continue to work to increase the number of MA students receiving advising. |
| **Continue work on developing degree plans for the MAs** - The degree plans for the MAs are developed. They are not yet ready to be implemented, but we will do so for the Spring 25 semester.  **New Strategy** – Complete and fully implement the degree plans for the MAs. |
| ***Sub-goal 1.2*: Spiritual Formation—Cultivate genuine devotion to Christ.** | | | |
| Increase faculty, student, and staff in service activities to 1000 participants by 2029. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **507** | In 2023-24, **593** students participated in serve day. That’s an increase of 86 or 16.9% in two years.  Fall NSO – 70  Fall Semester – 232  Spring NSO – 35  Spring Semester -256 (includes 31 distance students)  The strategy to increase opportunities for distance students seems to be helping increase the numbers. | **Expand service opportunities for distance students** – an email invited all students to participate in serve day regardless of location including specific instructions and opportunities. Birmingham and Whitworth held serve days at their location.  We will continue this strategy in the coming year. |
| **Increase service opportunities on campus** – the numbers from 2023-24 include events at fall and spring orientation. These new events account for 105 students. We are looking at new opportunities that work in the 24-25 academic year including one new opportunity on-campus and one additional opportunity for our off-campus students. |
| Increase and maintain student perception of spiritual growth to an average of 4.0 on a 5-point scale in the annual spiritual formation survey.\*\* | The initial survey was fall 2024. | With 282 responses received, the overall average score was 4.6.  The lowest two responses were “I take steps to engage needy or marginalized people in my community” (3.74) and “I share my faith with lost neighbors, coworkers, and family members” (3.99).  The highest two responses were “I am actively involved in a local church community” (4.91) and “I practice spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible reading, community worship, and fasting” (4.8). | **Provide specialized chapel experiences focused on spiritual formation** – Throughout the year, we utilized chapel as an opportunity to emphasize various aspects of spiritual formation such as worship, confession, scripture memory, etc. Particular encouragements were given to strengthen one’s relationship with Christ, such as focus on this passage. In addition, we have utilized testimonies to encourage others. We also had a panel discussion during one of the chapel services which centered on priorities and making margins in life for growth (Drs. Kristyn Carver and Craig Garrett).  In the coming year, we will continue this emphasis. We have a chapel discussion focused on Spiritual Abuse scheduled for the fall. |
| **Increase student participation in extra-curricular spiritual formation groups** – During the past year, we began three focused spiritual formation groups: one for college freshmen guys, one for ministerial students, and one for “campus leaders.” We had 39 students participate in these groups. Our plan is to continue to add intentionally to the number of offerings as we focus on specific groupings. We are also aware that various faculty members are involved in leading mentoring groups with students. |

\**Graduation* = students who completed the degree they started within 200% of the prescribed time

\*\*See preliminary survey (draft) in Appendix A.

***Goal 2:* Enrollment—Increase enrollment at a sustainable rate in strategic programs and delivery formats.**

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| ***Sub-goal 2.1*: Residential—Increase residential enrollment.** | | | |
| Increase campus residential credit hours for the undergraduate program by 2% year over year. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **2,931 credit hours** | In 2023-24, we sold 3,749 credit hours in the undergraduate program. This reflects an increase of 818 hours or 27.9%. | **Increase Preview Day attendance by 10% year over year by personalized direct mailing campaigns** – In 2023-24, we had 80 prospective students attend Leavell College Preview Day. That was an increase of 30 from the previous year or 60%. We will continue the goal of 10% because we do not think a 60% increase is likely from year to year.  We were able to do personalized direct mail, but this was limited to some qualified leads because of the time it took to handwrite the invitations. |
| Increase campus residential credit hours for master’s level students by 2% year over year. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **5,988 credit hours** | We sold **6,591** residential credit hours in the master’s programs in 2023-24. This reflects an increase of 603 hours of 10%. We are pleased that this number is up so significantly. | **Increase Preview Day attendance by 10% year over year by personalized direct mailing campaigns** - In 2023-24, we had 70 prospective students attend NOBTS Preview Day. That was a decrease of 22 from the previous year or -23.9%. We will continue the goal of 10%, but we may need to try some different things to increase this number.  We were able to do personalized direct mail, but this was limited to some qualified leads because of the time it took to handwrite the invitations. |
| Increase residential headcount in the doctoral program enrollment by 2% year over year. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **3,424 credit hours**  The measure mentions headcount, but we recorded credit hours initially. The headcount for 2022-23 was **535**. We will track headcount in the future since credit hours can be impacted by a variety of factors in the different programs. | We sold **3,621** credit hours in the doctoral programs in 2023-24. This reflects a 197 hour increase or 5.8%.  The headcount for 2023-24 was 542. This reflects an increase of 7 or 1.3%. | **Establish interest meetings for doctoral programs. Establish baseline for attendance in the 2023-2024 academic year. Once baseline is established we will create a trajectory for growth**. – The professional doctoral office was able to host 12 interest meetings with 112 people participating. This reflects an increase in total people at an interest meeting of 70 or 167%. In the coming year, we plan to visit 15-17 sites. At some point in the future we may have to narrow down how many trips we are making.  The PhD office was able to facilitate 3 conference recruiting efforts resulting in 13 inquiry cards. Two divisions also hosted six interest meetings resulting in 27 prospective students. Thus, the interest meetings for 2023-24 focused on PhD yielded 40 prospective students. Many of these efforts were new, and we will work to increase this number in the coming year. |
| ***Sub-goal 2.2*: Distance and Online—Increase mentoring and hybrid enrollment.** | | | |
| Increase mentoring credit hour enrollment by 2% year over year. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **1,194 credit hours** | We sold 1,346 credit hours through the mentoring program in 2023-24. This represents an increase of 152 or 12.7%. We do not expect an ongoing increase of this magnitude, but we are pleased to see the increase. This number should level off over the next few years. | **Ensure an adequate number of mentoring sections for courses required in the undergraduate and master's programs each semester** - We think we have the right number of mentoring sections each semester and we need to let this be implemented for a few semesters to be sure. |
| Increase one-time-weekend hybrid credit hours by 2% year over year. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **555 credit hours**  **Note:** an older version of this plan listed 1285 credit hours which included more than weekend hybrid numbers. | We sold 1,059 credit hours through the weekend hybrid courses in 2023-24. This represents an increase of 504 nearly double the previous year (90.8%). This format continues to grow, and we will continue to experiment to maximize credit hours in this format. | **Provide additional hybrid weekend opportunities in each academic semester** – The primary way we added weekend opportunities was through summer options which we did for the first time in the summer of 2024. In the 2024-25 academic year, we are splitting the courses over two weekends to see if students might come on more than one weekend. We will watch closely how this develops to be sure we are gaining and not just taking away the excitement of the weekend. |

***Goal 3: Financial Development—*Operate from a position of financial strength by maximizing the generation of resources.**

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| ***Sub-goal 3.1*: Providence Fund—Meet or exceed the Providence Fund goal.** | | | |
| Reach the Providence Fund annual goal established by the Cabinet and approved by the Trustees. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **Goal of $1,250,000** | In 2023-2024 the goal was $1,375,000  In 2023-24 we raised **$1,530,742**. The goal for 2024-25 is $1,425,000.  Donor retention rate is up 9% over the previous year to 63%.  The results suggest that we should keep applying the approach we have been using. So, we intend to press on with the strategies listed.  One note of caution, election years are typically lower fund-raising years. This is true not only nationwide but also for NOBTS. Four of the last five election years have been in the bottom ten fundraising years for NOBTS. | **Provide timely and emotionally captivating stories within direct mail appeals -** We were able to do this 8x this last year, and this seems to work well. We will do the same thing this year. |
| 4-year growth rate of **37.5 %** | **Increase donor retention to 65% over the next five years** – This is more of a goal than a strategy. New strategies are below.  **New Strategies**: We will introduce a new 90 day “donor communication strategy” that will introduce new donors to NOBTS and Leavell College.  We will also implement presidential acknowledgement for gifts of $5,000 or more. |
| Increase membership within the Providence Society by adding ten members annually for the next five years. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **104 members**  Academic Year 2021-2022  **88 members** | Currently, we have 93 members. That represents a decrease of 11 members. Eight new members were added this year, but we lost 17 members to death, life changes, and credit card changes. We will work with “Stripe” to ensure that donors are notified before their card expires. | **Invite other Providence Society members to share why they support the Providence Society** - We were not able to implement this strategy this year, but we have a plan to do so this year.  **New Strategy**: Identify donors in our database by giving patterns as prospects. |
| **Highlight the Providence Society in marketing strategy** – The providence society was highlighted in quarterly emails and brochures but did not have the success we wanted. We will continue to market it, but we are going to use a new strategy next year.  **New Strategy**: We are instituting some information tracking changes so we can be informed when a change occurs and reach out to the donor. |
| ***Sub-goal 3.2*: Alumni Philanthropy—Increase alumni giving.** | | | |
| Increase alumni financial contributions to 7%. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **4.55%**  Academic Year 2021-2022  **5.41%** | In 2023-24, this number dropped to **3.9%**. We had a lot of transition in the alumni office. With the hiring of a new Alumni Director, we are creating and implementing new strategies. | **Create and implement a communication plan that is service based, increasing interaction with our services** – We were able to do this and will continue to use this strategy. |
| **Develop a new solicitation plan for Alumni Association members** – We were able to develop this but didn’t implement yet. The new strategies include:  Creation of $5 a month subscription allowing them to join the alumni association.  Revamp and add benefits to the alumni association.  Increase communication including a monthly newsletter to alumni. |
| Increase alumni association membership to 1500 by 2029. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **995**  Academic Year 2021-2022  **415** | Alumni association membership in 2023-24 dropped to **491**. Last year was higher because of the history book campaign, but we lost a significant number from that mark. The alumni office struggled in leadership in the last year because of major health issues, and we have hired a new director to address issues. | **Create and implement a parent club, designed for parents to gift lifetime alumni association memberships to their children for a graduation present** – We have not started this program, but it will be implemented early in the 2024-25 academic year. |
| **Increase opportunities for alumni to gather** – We hosted live monthly online meetings with alumni. We are going to continue those but move to a format that can be watched later.  **New Strategies**: Creation of $5 a month club allowing them to join the alumni association.  Revamp and add benefits to the alumni association.  Increase communication including a monthly newsletter to alumni. |
| ***Sub-goal 3.3*: Foundation Board—Increase impact of and membership in the Foundation Board.** | | | |
| Reach the Giving Tuesday Matching Gift established by the Foundation Board. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **$200,000 goal**  Academic Year 2021-2022  **$150,000 goal** | In 2023-2024, the goal was $200,000. We surpassed that goal with **$270,000**. This number represents a record high, and we are continuing developing ways to increase to the support from the foundation board. | **We will assess the Giving Tuesday and matching gifts strategy** - We completed the assessment and have determined that the current strategy is effective and essential for this work. |
| **Encourage the Foundation Board members to participate -** Various leaders were encouraged to enlist support from other foundation board members. A solicitation letter was sent to each foundation board member, and this was followed by an email.  We will continue and expand this strategy with six solicitation letters from various members of the seminary community. |
| Increase the membership of the Foundation Board by adding ten members annually for the next five years. | Academic Year 2022-2023  **93 members** | In 2023-2024 we dropped to **87 members.** Seven new members were added, but thirteen members were removed by death, request, or inactivity.  One of the things we realize is the importance of familial succession. We have started promoting the need for our current members to get their families involved. This seems to be working as we already have verbal commitments for the meeting in March 2025. | **Encourage the Foundation Board members to invite their friends to join -** We were able to implement this strategy. Currently, we have limited success, but we have seen potential. |
| **Provide recruiting materials for the Foundation Board Members** - We provided flyers at the annual meeting and emailed them as well. We have had members ask us to send materials to their associates. We will continue to do this.  **New Strategy**: Host at least 6 NOBTS and Friends events this year which focus upon recruiting for the foundation board. |

**Appendix A**

**Spiritual Formation Survey—Draft**

To be given every fall during the term check-in process.

Actions (1-Never, 2-Not Often, 3-Occasionally, 4-Often, 5-Regularly)

1. I take steps to engage my community (needy or marginalized people).
2. I share my faith with lost neighbors, coworkers, and family members.
3. I practice spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible reading, study, community worship, and fasting.
4. The fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) is more evident in how I treat others.
5. I am actively involved in a local church community.

Emotions (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neither Agree/Disagree, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree)

1. I am content with serving others in ways that may never be seen or applauded.
2. I am more aware of my identity being found in Christ and the implications that has upon the way I view myself.
3. I have grown in my affection for Christ and in my intimacy with Him.
4. I am more aware of sin in life and quick to repent/confess sin.
5. I understand God’s mercy towards me, and it leads me to forgive others who have wronged me.
6. I am more aware of the power of my words to both uplift and tear down others.