

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

2024 - 2029

# Where the SPIRIT OF THE LORD is, **THERE IS LIBERTY**.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:17

# TABLE of CONTENTS

Letter from the President
Our Playbook
Extending Our Legacy: Our Strategic Plan
Epic Values: The Heart of the Liberty Way
How We Build Champions
Knowledge Aflame: Shaping the Future with Fait
Goal 1: Faith First
Goal 2: Lifelong Learning
Goal 3: Authentic Christian Culture
Goal 4: Mission-Driven Excellence
Goal 5: Engaged Community
Goal 6: Stewardship and Service

	Pg. 4
	Pg. 7
	Pg. 8
	Pg. 11
	Pg. 12
and Purpose	Pg. 15
	Pg. 16
	Pg. 17
	Pg. 18
	Pg. 19
<u></u>	Pg. 20
	Pg. 21



# **LETTER** from the **PRESIDENT**



God used Liberty University to change my life, and I owe a lot to my alma mater. As a young lieutenant, I needed to continue my education, but it did not seem possible in my role as a military service member. Enter Liberty's distance learning program, the predecessor of our online programs. Through videotaped lectures and proctored tests, I was able to complete my first graduate

degree, which was soon followed by a second graduate degree on campus. Liberty made the impossible possible for me.

I returned to Liberty, now as president, wanting to give back to the university that gave me so much. My purpose in this season is helping others experience the same support and faith-driven environment here that made the impossible possible for me.

Liberty University has always been a trailblazer in offering exceptional education rooted in Christian values. There's something special about Liberty — the student body, the spiritual life, and the palpable sense of God's hand on this mountain. I truly love being part of a place where so many are deeply engaged in pouring themselves into raising the next generation — which has been The Liberty Way all along. Dr. Jerry Falwell began Liberty University with the goal of cultivating a place where academic excellence and spiritual development were both of utmost importance. The ultimate result would be sending out highly skilled professionals equipped to serve in their chosen fields and called to use their gifts and knowledge to make the world a better place.

How do we Train Champions for Christ? We don't teach students what to think; we teach them how to think. We don't just teach students to recognize problems; we teach them to become problem solvers. We want each student, whether studying on campus or online, to leave Liberty as a better person, a more critical thinker, a more valuable employee — a *Champion* ready to achieve milestones rather than just going through the motions.

That's how we do what we do.

And the end result is evidenced by countless Liberty graduates making a difference where God plants them. It's the nurse who meets her patients' needs while also taking a moment to encourage their loved ones. We see it in the successful businessman who gives back to his community. We see it in the pilot who donates his time and skills to deliver supplies to missionaries.

Those who have been around Liberty long enough may think of the Liberty Way in terms of our guidelines and best practices. But that's just our handbook. *Training Champions for Christ* — that's the true Liberty Way.

As we look at all the phenomenal things God has done for us, we are inspired to continue our mission with renewed vigor and dedication. As we look to the university's future, we will stay true to the original mission. We're not reinventing the wheel — we're evolving with the times. We want to remain relevant without compromising the foundational vision of Liberty. If it's Christian, it ought to be Christian.

Today, I am excited to introduce our strategic plan, which is designed to elevate our mission and impact even further.

Our strategic planning process has been a collaborative, bottomup approach, gathering insights and feedback from our entire community. This process began with surveys, environmental scans, and hours upon hours of data review — all to ensure that our plan reflects our students, faculty, staff, and stakeholders.

While our plan will inevitably spark some changes, we want those changes to enhance, rather than diminish, the experience of our students, faculty, and staff. We want every member of our community to flourish here and find meaning, purpose, and value during their time at Liberty and beyond.

How do we carry out our strategic plan? We simply remain focused on our mission and vision and realize that we must be **guided by GRACE**.

- Graduation and Student Success
- Retention
- Academic Enrollment
- Christian Culture
- Endowment

These five pillars are what our plan's goals and measures are built upon. They are not new ideas, but rather elements that have always been part of Liberty's story.

Thank you for being part of this incredible journey. Together, let us continue to honor God as Liberty University extends its reach as a beacon of hope, faith, and excellence.



### **Our Playbook**

As we look back on all God has done on this mountain, we are thankful for those who came before us. We recognize they invested time, work, and their faith to bring Liberty where it is today. But 1 Corinthians 15:10 reminds us that anything we accomplish is because the grace of God is with us.

How do we carry out our strategic plan? We simply remain focused on our mission and vision and realize that we must be **guided by GRACE**.

#### **Graduation and Student Success**

Our strategic plan places a strong emphasis on graduation and student success, recognizing that the ultimate measure of our mission is the success of our students and the impact they make on others. By providing access to resources like support services, academic advising, and career planning, we offer our students the tools they need to complete their education and excel in their chosen fields.

#### Retention

A critical component of our strategic plan, retention reflects our dedication to cultivating an engaging and supportive educational environment. By focusing on initiatives that enhance the student experience, we intend to keep our students engaged and motivated throughout their academic journey. These initiatives focus not only on academic support but also on mental health, spiritual growth, and campus involvement. We don't just want our students to stay at Liberty — we want them to thrive here, growing in their faith and academic pursuits.

#### **Academic Enrollment**

Strategically increasing our academic enrollment is a key goal within our plan, as it will allow us to expand our reach and impact. Through targeted recruitment strategies, enhanced scholarship opportunities, and innovative academic offerings, we can grow. Yet we are also committed to exercise discernment with our growth — we never want to grow in a way that diminishes our students' experience.

#### **Christian Culture**

Maintaining and strengthening our Christian culture is at the heart of our strategic plan. We are dedicated to fostering an environment where faith is integrated into every aspect of university life. This impacts the way we treat each other, how we lead our teams, and how we serve others. By prioritizing our faith, we can preserve the vibrant Christian culture that sets us apart from other schools.

#### Endowment

Protecting and building our endowment is crucial to the longterm sustainability and growth of Liberty. Our strategic plan outlines initiatives to increase financial support from alumni, donors, and other stakeholders, ensuring that we have the resources needed to fund scholarships, enhance academic programs, and maintain our state-of-the-art facilities. Securing financial stability is a way we can protect the student experience and preserve the future of Liberty, regardless of economic conditions.

### **Extending Our Legacy:** Our Strategic Plan

At Liberty University our unwavering commitment to Training Champions for Christ is the foundation upon which all our efforts are built. This commitment has guided every chapter of Liberty's story so far.

Our founder, Dr. Jerry Falwell, was a man of vision - always seeing into the future and prayerfully preparing for it. In fact, when he shared his vision that the mountain where he had hunted and hiked as a child would one day be the home of a university that would train students to become professionals ready to change the world, others laughed.

Dr. Falwell was not deterred by doubters — instead, he prayed. In the fall of 1971, Lynchburg Baptist College began with 154 students taught by four full-time faculty. In its early years, classes were spread all over town, and students were housed in hotels, hospital rooms, and even Thomas Road members' homes.

But Dr. Falwell continued to pray. The early days of what would become Liberty University were marked by poor accommodations, less-than-ideal classrooms, and a dedicated faculty and staff who missed a paycheck or two but were determined to see the vision come to fruition.

Since those days Liberty has come very far. During the school year, our campus is home to over 15,000 students who live, study, and play in our state-of-the-art buildings, athletic facilities, and recreational areas. What started as a distance learning program transformed into one of the world's first online programs. Today, our online community is comprised of nearly 125,000 students who can choose from over 600 unique programs.

#### But God isn't finished with Liberty yet.

We honor our founder's determination to see and prepare for a better future by looking into the next five years and deciding how we will continue to navigate the changing landscape of higher education. By clearly defining our priorities and setting measurable goals, our strategic plan will help us stay on track and be clear about where we are headed.

As we think about the future, we know that complacency is not an option. We recognize the need to evolve with the times to stay relevant and impactful in an ever-changing world. This booklet explains how we plan to make Liberty better while staying true to who we are, detailing the initiatives and goals that will drive our growth and success in the years to come.

# "AT LIBERTY, WE CANNOT MERELY ADAPT TO CHANGE -WE MUST LEAD IT. "

#### At Liberty, we cannot merely adapt to change - we must lead it.

For our students, our strategic plan translates into an educational environment where academic excellence, spiritual growth, and personal development are seamlessly integrated. Parents can rest assured that their children are receiving an education grounded in Christian values, preparing them to thrive in their careers and communities. Alumni will see their alma mater continue to grow in reputation and impact, making their degrees even more valuable. Donors will have confidence that their contributions are being used strategically to foster growth and innovation, furthering our mission. Faculty and staff will benefit from a supportive and dynamic work environment that encourages professional development and excellence in teaching, research, and service.

Liberty started with a God-given vision. As He continues to grow that vision, there will always be more work to do.





# Epic Values: The Heart of the Liberty Way

Liberty University began with a mountain and an epic dream. Our founder had a vision that the world could be filled with professionals who loved God and were the very best at what they'd been called to do.

He envisioned a place where young people could be taught the importance of staying faithful to God, being dedicated to pursuing excellence in their vocations, and authentically demonstrating God's love to those around them. The end product would be *Champions for Christ*.

For the past 50 years we've continued to *Train Champions for Christ*. How we do that has looked different throughout the years, but we've never strayed from our core mission and the values that support it. These core values have been the foundation of who we are and will guide us into the future.

Our EPIC values shape how we Train Champions for Christ. This is what we truly mean by The Liberty Way.

**Excellence in every initiative.** Excellence is part of our DNA. Dr. Falwell used to say, "If it's Christian, it ought to be better." At Liberty, we teach the importance of pursuing excellence while recognizing that innovation is key. From the classroom to the athletic field, we train students to be *Champions* in every area of life.

**Potential in every student.** Our students are more than numbers. We see their potential, and we understand that pursuing excellence requires more than academic rigor - it also requires they have professors who are experienced and,

most importantly, care about them. Our students learn under leaders who first mentor them and then send them out, ready to pursue their callings and change life for others. That philosophy extends to those who serve students outside the classroom. Our leadership and staff seek to be service-minded, always making others a priority.

**Integrity in every action.** We understand that God has blessed this mountain, and with that blessing comes the responsibility of ensuring we do our best with whatever God provides us, using it to positively impact our students and our community. That's why we intentionally serve within our community — our classmates, co-workers, and peers while also creating opportunities to serve those in our greater Lynchburg community and beyond. We believe that coming alongside those going through difficult times by serving them and advocating for them is an important way we demonstrate being *Champions for Christ*.

**Christian in every way.** As President Costin says, "If it's Christian, it ought to be Christian." This attitude shapes our culture, where we recognize the importance of excellence, see the potential in others, and demonstrate integrity in every action. We celebrate that God has uniquely gifted us as individuals, while recognizing that our faith unites us all. Our faith also motivates us to responsibly steward our talents, time, and other resources as we do what God has called us to do.

Our strategic plan builds on these **EPIC** values, guiding us as we look into the future so Liberty University remains a place where *Champions for Christ* are trained.



Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

Liberty University started with the idea of training young men and women who were dedicated to God, authentic in their faith, and bold in pursuing their calling. This concept would later become Training Champions for Christ.

Liberty is the training ground upon which our Champions prepare to run the race God has set before them.









## Knowledge Aflame: Shaping the Future with Faith and Purpose

Our mission and vision to *Train Champions for Christ* are deeply rooted in the Great Commission, which requires us to use our God-given callings to change the world. This mission shapes how we build our community, design our educational programs, and inspire our students.

Keeping our focus on our mission and values ensures that we remain focused on spiritual growth, moral integrity, and a deep sense of service to others. Our goal is to foster an environment where everyone is motivated to pursue excellence in their personal, academic, and professional lives while remaining steadfast in their faith. **This is the Liberty Way**.

Our strategic plan is designed to ensure that we remain focused on our mission and vision both now and over the next five years. It includes mechanisms for regular evaluation and flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. This ensures that while we stay true to our mission and vision, we can also adapt to new opportunities and challenges, maintaining our relevance and impact in an ever-evolving world.

Our motto, "Knowledge Aflame," demonstrates our commitment to providing a quality education with a Christian foundation. In 1974, inspired by that very motto, our student body voted to be called the "Flames."

Thus, it is appropriate that our strategic plan is encapsulated in the acronym FLAMES, which stands for:

- Faith First: Keeping faith at the core of everything we do.
- Lifelong Learning: Encouraging continuous personal and professional growth.
- Authentic Christian Culture: Promoting a genuine and vibrant Christian community.
- **Mission-Driven Excellence:** Pursuing the highest standards in all our endeavors.
- **Engaged Community:** Building strong, supportive relationships within and beyond our campus.
- **Stewardship and Service:** Investing in others so they can fulfill God's calling.

While our strategic plan is intended to help us navigate the next five years, it doesn't stop there — it sets the stage for continuous growth and innovation. Guided by **GRACE**, Liberty will build on our successes, adjust when needed, and remain steadfast so that on this mountain, anyone will find **Knowledge Aflame**.



### **Goal 1:** Faith First

Drawing inspiration from the principle of "Jesus First," a conviction firmly held by our founder, Dr. Jerry Falwell, we continue to uphold the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the foundational element of each of our endeavors. We recognize that faithfulness to Him is our first and primary duty as a Christian university before all other institutional goals and objectives. When we allow Jesus to be first in all matters of life and daily pursuits, we ensure that the integration of the Christian faith extends beyond being an academic exercise to guiding every aspect of university instruction, operation, and administration. It is the way that we lead. Christ, above all, must be evident in all aspects of learning and living. From the classroom to the boardroom, we are intentional about developing a Christ-centered community among students, faculty, and staff as we remain committed to the Lordship of Christ and ensure that every Liberty employee and student has the opportunity to know and follow Christ and to become a lifelong Champion for Christ. (Exodus 20:3-5, Deuteronomy 6:5, Proverbs 16:3, Matthew 6:33, Luke 10:27, John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 5:1, Colossians 1:16-17, Colossians 3:1-2, Hebrews 12:2)

# Goal 2: Lifelong Learning

Embracing the principle that education is a lifelong journey, we dedicate ourselves to fostering continuous growth and curiosity in our community. Our teaching approaches and academic programs are designed to cultivate critical thinking, adaptability, and a love for learning that extend beyond the classroom. We equip students not only for their careers but also for a lifetime of intellectual and spiritual development. (Proverbs 1:5, Proverbs 4:13, Proverbs 9:9, Colossians 2:8, James 1:5)





18

### 

Building on the statement of Dr. Jerry Falwell, "If it's Christian, it ought to be better," our authentic Christian culture goal is succinctly captured by Dr. Dondi Costin's corollary, "If it's Christian, it ought to be Christian." This principle guides our commitment to fostering a culture of excellence and human flourishing among our faculty and staff, aligning with Christ's model of servant leadership. We emphasize strategic hiring, professional development, and retention practices to ensure our workplace not only meets high standards of excellence but also aligns with our biblical worldview. Our approach extends to creating a Christ-centered university culture that thrives on collaboration, diversity of thought, and strong leadership support, reflecting our deep-rooted Christian values in every facet of university life. This holistic strategy aims to enhance operational effectiveness and cultivate a community where all members are encouraged to thrive both spiritually and professionally, ultimately encouraging students to make meaningful, positive impacts in their respective communities and the broader world. (Genesis 1:27, Proverbs 3:34, Proverbs 27:17, Micah 6:8, Matthew 20:26-28, Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 4:2-3, Ephesians 4:32, Philippians 2:3-8, Colossians 3:23-24, 2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Peter 4:10)

### • **Goal 4:** Mission-Driven Excellence

Our institutional mission to glorify God through higher education drives our commitment to excellence in all endeavors. We strive for the highest standards in teaching, research, and service, ensuring our work honors God and serves our community effectively. This mission-centric approach guides our strategic decisions and operational priorities. (2 Chronicles 15:7, Matthew 5:16, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:23-24, 2 Timothy 2:15, James 3:13)



### F | L | A | **M** | E | S



## Goal 5: Engaged Community

Following the biblical call to unity and fellowship, we foster a vibrant, engaged community. Our campus is a place where diverse perspectives and backgrounds are celebrated, encouraging respectful dialogue and mutual understanding. We are committed to fostering a nurturing environment where every individual feels valued, connected, and empowered to contribute. (Proverbs 3:27, Ecclesiastes 4:12, Luke 10:25-37, John 13:34-35, 1 Corinthians 12:27)

# 😤 Goal 6: Stewardship & Service

Our institution will emphasize stewardship as a core tenet of our faith, prioritizing the responsible management of God's creation in our resources and operations. This focus on stewardship will foster sustainable practices and community engagement, allowing us to serve as a model of Christian stewardship and invite others to connect with our mission and values. (Genesis 47:13-19, Psalm 24:1, Proverbs 11:25, Matthew 25:14-30, 35-40; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Galatians 6:9-10, 1 Peter 4:10)





LIBERTY'S FUTURE IS BRIGHT, and we're excited to see how God will continue to work on this mountain in the next five years — and for many generations to come.

Learn how you can be part of our journey! Visit *Liberty.edu/StrategicPlan*.

41



### LIBERTY UNIVERSITY | 1971 UNIVERSITY BLVD | LYNCHBURG, VA 24515

Fall 2024