INTRODUCTION

To create a strategic plan is a significant responsibility. It is to honor the nearly 175 years of Erskine's history while pursuing the mission of the institution into the future. It is to remain faithful to our call to be a Christian academic community, faithfully seeking the Lord’s wisdom and guidance.

Erskine College and Seminary finds itself at a crucial moment in its history. In recent years we have experienced trials in the form of budget struggles, governance strife, and stagnant enrollment. We have experienced a decline in our total number of donors and relational tension within our college, our denomination, and many of our alumni.

And yet, the Lord has been faithful.

He has provided the resources we need to continue offering an outstanding education to our students. He has offered the opportunity for those in leadership at Erskine to consider seriously what it means to be an excellent Christian liberal arts college and theological seminary that seeks to glorify God in all it does. In His generous grace, He has brought us to a place where all who are passionate about the future of Erskine must seek Him to discern the way in which we should go.

Through this process, the leadership of Erskine has recognized our need for enduring peace and wisdom and reflected on Erskine's unique and high calling as the representative of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in the ministry of Christian higher education. Thus, the Board of Trustees (comprised of alumni, ARP pastors, and other friends of the institution) has renewed its focus on our central mission. The renewal of Erskine's commitment to our core purpose and mission is reflected in the Institutional Mission Statement, adopted unanimously by the Board of Trustees in the spring of 2012:

Erskine College exists to glorify God as a Christian academic community where students are equipped to flourish as whole persons for lives of service through the pursuit of undergraduate liberal arts and graduate theological education.

It is with this mission in mind that we began our process to produce a strategic plan that would set the course for the next five years.

In the summer of 2012, President David Norman appointed a Strategic Planning Committee including members of diverse constituencies both on and off campus.

Members representing the Board, administrators, and faculty and staff from both college and seminary brought a variety of perspectives and gifts to the table, but were united in prayer and a fervent desire to honor God with their work. The Committee was charged with creating a five-year plan to guide decision-making and the stewardship of Erskine’s resources to address the demands of academic standards and accreditation, build a strong faculty, and offer programs of study that equip students to flourish as whole persons.

The process began at a two-day retreat in the mountains of North Carolina where the committee conducted a comprehensive analysis of the institution’s strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats. The group then identified key performance indicators that will mark the success of the various educational and administrative programs on campus as the plan is implemented. At subsequent meetings throughout the summer, the committee synthesized the information and identified six broad strategic goals. These strategic goals represent a continued commitment to Erskine’s mission and distinct approach to higher education. In order to reach the goals, the committee was divided into work groups and charged with creating plans consisting of desirable results, or objectives, and measurable action items, or strategies. It was essential that these goals and objectives be specific and achievable in the context of Erskine’s current and foreseeable realities.

The committee came back together to draft a clear and coherent strategic plan that was clearly linked to Erskine’s mission statement. The committee then vetted the plan through the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff for feedback. The final product provides members of the Erskine community with a shared vision and common objectives.

Strategic plans must be living documents. If this plan sits in binders on shelves collecting dust, it is destined to fail. To succeed it must be organic and dynamic; there must be experience setbacks, and at times strategies will need to be adjusted to accommodate internal and external realities. The strategic plan will serve as the backbone of institutional effectiveness initiatives for the next five years.

The core purpose of the 2012–2017 Strategic Plan is to outline a faithful effort to coordinate the stewardship of Erskine College and Seminary. We remain committed to glorifying God and to equipping our students to flourish as whole persons. We also promise to pursue this plan in a spirit of humility. It is not a list of what we want, nor is it a plan to make a profit. We aspire only to remain faithful as we seek His kingdom.
2012-2017 STRATEGIC PLAN

Erskine stewards this mission by meeting the demands of academic standards and accreditation, building a strong faculty, and offering programs of study that equip students to flourish as whole persons. To fulfill these objectives, Erskine has created a five-year strategic plan to guide its decision-making and the stewardship of its resources. [cf. SPCHE]

It is our desire for God’s glory alone to be the chief end of every goal, objective, and strategy listed in this strategic plan.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

(Proverbs 9:10)

STRATEGIC GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1: Erskine is nationally known as a faithful liberal arts community

Objective 1.1: Create and implement coherent and compelling core curricula for the college and seminary

Strategy 1.1.1: Appoint an ad hoc committee, the majority of whose members are tenured college professors, with the charge to develop a coherent and compelling core curriculum for the college* (Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs – 12/11/2012)

Strategy 1.1.2: Appoint an ad hoc committee, the majority of whose members are tenured seminary professors, with the charge to develop a coherent and compelling core curriculum for the seminary* (Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs – 12/11/2012)

*This committee will work independently, but will receive input from the THRIVE: Initiative and the other core curriculum committee. The committee will stay abreast of and compliant with all relevant current and emerging Board policy. Although the committee will focus on curriculum, it will be expected that its recommendations will include not only course requirements but also emphases and suggestions for co-curricular features of Erskine life such as chapels, convocations, and residence life.

Strategy 1.1.3: Present college core curriculum plan to college faculty for approval (College Core Curriculum Committee – 12/11/2013)

Strategy 1.1.4: Present seminary core curriculum plan to seminary faculty for approval (Seminary Core Curriculum Committee – 12/11/2013)

Strategy 1.1.5: Present college and seminary core curriculum plans to Board of Trustees for inclusion in the 2014 – 2015 catalogs (President – 2/28/2014)

Objective 1.2: Determine the academic offerings at the college and seminary that best embody the institutional mission

Strategy 1.2.1: Develop a process for reviewing and approving current and potential course and degree offerings for the college and seminary (Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs – 12/31/2014)

Strategy 1.2.2: Present academic offerings review process to the Board of Trustees for inclusion in the 2015-16 faculty manuals (President – 2/28/2015)

Objective 1.3: Recruit and retain academically excellent mission-fit faculty members

Strategy 1.3.1: Expand administrative and academic networks to identify potential hires (Cabinet and College & Seminary Faculties – Ongoing)

Strategy 1.3.2: Create a compensation model for faculty which will ensure Erskine salaries and benefits remain internally consistent and in line with appropriate peer benchmarks (President, Senior Vice Presidents – 8/31/2013)

Strategy 1.3.3: Implement compensation model (President, Senior Vice Presidents – Contingent upon budget)

Strategy 1.3.4: Review progress and establish compensation priorities (President – Annual)

Objective 1.4: Develop faculty members into educational leaders committed to furthering the institutional mission

Strategy 1.4.1: The Faculty Development Committee [College] will continue its work (Faculty Development Committee – Ongoing)

Strategy 1.4.2: Increase the number of faculty members who attend and/or present at regional and national professional meetings (Cabinet, Academic Department Heads, and Faculty Development Committee – Ongoing)

Strategy 1.4.3: Increase the number of faculty members who publish peer-reviewed works (Department Heads and Faculty Development Committee – Ongoing)

Strategy 1.4.4: Devise and implement a schedule for faculty forums devoted to sharing best practices in research, teaching, and the development of the liberal arts tradition [College] (President and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs – 5/31/2013)
»Goal 2: Student enrollment is at optimum capacity with students who fit Erskine’s target student profiles

Objective 2.1: To internally articulate and better implement our institutional enrollment management model

Strategy 2.1.1: Conduct an enrollment management SWOT analysis as an internal self-assessment and environmental scan (President – 12/31/2013)

Strategy 2.1.2: Create and adopt an institutional enrollment management model (Institutional Enrollment Committee – 12/31/2013)

Strategy 2.1.3: Review effectiveness of institutional enrollment management model and make needed changes (Institutional Enrollment Committee – Annual)

Objective 2.2: Recruit capacity classes with students who fit Erskine’s target student profiles

Strategy 2.2.1: Conduct an institutional resource audit to determine the capacity classes for undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level students (College Administrative Dean, Seminary Dean – 12/31/2013)

Strategy 2.2.2: Create a target student profile for undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level students (Institutional Enrollment Committee – 12/31/2013)

Strategy 2.2.3: As part of the institutional enrollment management model, create a multi-year recruitment strategy that increasingly focuses on the target students for undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level students (Institutional Director of Admissions – 12/31/2013)

Strategy 2.2.4: Refine enrollment goals based upon the institutional enrollment management plan and the capacity for undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level students (Institutional Enrollment Committee – Ongoing)

Strategy 2.2.5: Attain enrollment goals for undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level students (Institutional Director of Admissions and Institutional Director of Financial Aid – Annual)

Objective 2.3: Increase retention and persistence for all undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level classes

Strategy 2.3.1: Conduct a retention and persistence study to establish retention and persistence goals for undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level students (Institutional Retention Committee – 5/31/2014)

Strategy 2.3.2: Create a plan to increase retention and persistence rates for undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level students (Institutional Retention Committee – 8/31/2014)

Strategy 2.3.3: Implement plan to increase retention and persistence rates for undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level students (Institutional Retention Committee – 8/31/2014)

Strategy 2.3.4: Attain retention and persistence goals for undergraduate, master’s, and Doctor of Ministry level students (Institutional Retention Committee – 12/31/2017)
Objective 3.1: Implement and further develop programs that build on THRIVE initiative

**Strategy 3.1.1:** Present and assess THRIVE programs that explore various implementation methods (THRIVE Committee – 5/31/2013)

**Strategy 3.1.2:** Refine and communicate THRIVE content (THRIVE Committee – 5/31/2013)

**Strategy 3.1.3:** Implement first year of THRIVE programmatic cycle, taking significant steps to integrate current convocation and chapel model (THRIVE Committee – 5/31/2013)

**Strategy 3.1.4:** Conduct formative evaluations throughout each year of cycle to improve delivery, content, and quality of THRIVE (THRIVE Committee – Ongoing)

**Strategy 3.1.5:** Conduct summative evaluation of program after the four-year cycle to measure outcomes and determine if overall changes are necessary (THRIVE Committee – 5/31/2017)

Objective 3.2: Articulate an educational philosophy that provides a framework for how Erskine plans for, prioritizes, and evaluates all areas of its community

**Strategy 3.2.1:** Create an overarching philosophy that will provide context and central tenets (President – 12/31/2012)

**Strategy 3.2.2:** Create academic department mission statements that reflect the tenets in the overarching educational philosophy (President in consultation with Academic Department Heads – 5/31/2015)

**Strategy 3.2.3:** Create co-curricular philosophy statements that reflect the tenets in the overarching educational philosophy (President in consultation with Co-Curricular Department Heads – 5/31/2015)

**Strategy 3.2.4:** Publish the overarching philosophy and the co-curricular statements in a single document to be shared on campus and on Erskine’s website (Vice President for Communications – 12/31/2015)

**Strategy 3.2.5:** Review and revise goals and objectives based on assessment data on an annual basis (President and Cabinet – 5/31/2017)

Objective 3.3: Create cultures of effectiveness and improvement goals institution-wide

**Strategy 3.3.1:** Develop a list of desired outcomes and/or goals that reflect Erskine’s mission and strategic plan (Dean of Students and Institutional Effectiveness in conjunction with Academic and Co-Curricular Department Heads – Annual)

**Strategy 3.3.2:** Develop a list of key performance indicators and/or assessments that measure the effectiveness of its programs and services in reaching the stated outcomes and/or goals (Dean of Students and Institutional Effectiveness in conjunction with Academic and Co-Curricular Department Heads – Annual)

**Strategy 3.3.3:** Review and revise goals and objectives based on assessment data on an annual basis (Dean of Students and Institutional Effectiveness in conjunction with Academic and Co-Curricular Department Heads – Annual)

Objective 3.4: Support and encourage the spiritual flourishing of its community

**Strategy 3.4.1:** Appoint and charge a task force consisting of faculty and staff from the college and seminary, board members, and representatives from the denomination (President – 12/31/2013)

**Strategy 3.4.2:** Conduct a review of spiritual formation practices, examining organizational structures and best practices developed by institutions similar to Erskine (Spiritual Flourishing Task Force – 12/31/2014)

**Strategy 3.4.3:** Conduct a needs assessment of Erskine students, faculty and staff (Spiritual Flourishing Task Force – 12/31/2014)

**Strategy 3.4.4:** Provide recommendations to the President (Spiritual Flourishing Task Force – 5/31/2015)

**Strategy 3.4.5:** Create an implementation timeline (Cabinet – 8/31/2015)

Objective 3.5: Contribute to faculty and staff “whole person flourishing” by helping to nurture their spiritual, emotional, physical, social, intellectual, and vocational health in a trustful, caring environment

**Strategy 3.5.1:** Identify a current institutional committee or establish a new committee to monitor and develop programs for “whole person flourishing” among faculty and staff (President – 12/31/2014)

**Strategy 3.5.2:** Conduct a needs and satisfaction assessment related to faculty and staff’s opportunities to flourish as whole persons (Appointed Committee – 12/31/2014)

**Strategy 3.5.3:** Establish a goal for an increase in faculty-staff satisfaction by the fall of 2017 (Appointed Committee – 12/31/2014)

**Strategy 3.5.4:** Present programs, workshops, and social opportunities throughout the year to meet the identified needs of faculty and staff (Appointed Committee – Ongoing)

**Strategy 3.5.5:** Conduct a satisfaction assessment related to faculty and staff’s opportunities to flourish as whole persons and use results to shape the next year’s programs each spring (Appointed Committee – Ongoing)
Goal 4: The Erskine brand is clearly defined and publicly understood

Objective 4.1: Create an Erskine Brand Guide that outlines Erskine’s core identity, values, educational experience, and brand guidelines

- **Strategy 4.1.1:** Clearly articulate Erskine’s core identity, values, and educational experience (Vice President for Communications – 6/30/2014)

- **Strategy 4.1.2:** Create the brand guidelines, which include things such as color palette, logo usage, typography, and brand review process (Vice President for Communications – 6/30/2014)

Objective 4.2: Define and implement a strategy that connects Erskine’s key constituencies to this brand in a powerful and personal way

- **Strategy 4.2.1:** Identify the most important constituencies that must be engaged (Vice President for Communications – 5/31/2012)

- **Strategy 4.2.2:** Decide the most important messages to be communicated to each constituency (Vice President for Communications – 5/31/2013)

- **Strategy 4.2.3:** Identify and train brand ambassadors in each key constituency that will take Erskine’s brand and messages to their circles of influence (Vice President for Communications – 12/31/2013)

- **Strategy 4.2.4:** Create a rollout plan for brand/marketing strategy that coincides with Erskine’s 175th Anniversary in 2014 (Vice President for Communications and Vice President for Advancement – 5/31/2014)

Objective 4.3: Evaluate the effectiveness of the brand strategy and identify gaps on an annual basis

- **Strategy 4.3.1:** Assemble an advisory board with representatives from each key constituency (Vice President for Communications – 12/31/2013)

- **Strategy 4.3.2:** Schedule a meeting with this advisory board on an annual basis to review effectiveness of brand strategy beginning in spring 2014 (Vice President for Communications – Ongoing)

- **Strategy 4.3.3:** Change this advisory board on an annual basis (Vice President for Communications – Ongoing)
Goal 5: Erskine has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support its mission, programs, and services

Objective 5.1: Consistently achieve a balanced operating budget

- **Strategy 5.1.1:** Create an annual operating budget, which is balanced and includes a $200,000 contingency, in January/February for the following fiscal year (Cabinet – Ongoing)
- **Strategy 5.1.2:** Maintain a balanced operating budget through monthly budget-to-actual reports and financial critical indicators (Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations – Ongoing)

Objective 5.2: Recruit, retain, develop, and competitively compensate a well-qualified faculty and staff

- **Strategy 5.2.1:** Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of faculty and staff complement (Sr. Vice Presidents – Ongoing)
- **Strategy 5.2.2:** Conduct focused employment searches that reach a broad range of potential candidates who possess strong qualifications and share Erskine's evangelical mission (Director of Human Resources – Ongoing)
- **Strategy 5.2.3:** Conduct annual reviews for all faculty and staff for the purposes of evaluating performance toward the Erskine mission statement and one’s job responsibilities and providing constructive feedback (President – Ongoing)
- **Strategy 5.2.4:** Encourage participation in at least one professional development and/or continuing education opportunity for each member of the faculty and for director-level staff, every other year (Academic Department Heads and Co-Curricular Department Heads – Ongoing)
- **Strategy 5.2.5:** Create a compensation model for faculty and staff that will ensure Erskine salaries and benefits remain internally consistent and in line with appropriate peer benchmarks (President – 8/31/2013)
- **Strategy 5.2.6:** Implement compensation model (President or Designee – 8/31/2013)
- **Strategy 5.2.7:** Review progress and establish compensation priorities (President – Annual)

Objective 5.3: Implement a comprehensive development strategy that supports annual operations and lays the groundwork for upcoming capital campaigns

- **Strategy 5.3.1:** Create a comprehensive development plan to enhance the advancement/alumni program (Vice President for Advancement – 12/31/2012)
- **Strategy 5.3.2:** Achieve the unrestricted annual fund goal each year (Vice President for Advancement – Ongoing)
- **Strategy 5.3.3:** Increase alumni giving by 50% (dollar amount) and participation to at least 25% (Vice President for Advancement – 12/31/2017)
- **Strategy 5.3.4:** Identify and cultivate two to four potential new major donors (giving in excess of $25,000) to Erskine each year (Board of Trustees, President, Vice President for Advancement – Ongoing)
- **Strategy 5.3.5:** Identify the needs, major projects, and types of donors to be included in the institution’s next capital campaign (Board of Trustees and Cabinet – 5/31/2015)
- **Strategy 5.3.6:** Determine the feasibility of a capital campaign (Vice President for Advancement – 5/31/2016)
- **Strategy 5.3.7:** Grow the fair market value of the endowment through earnings and new gifts by 25% (Vice President for Advancement, President, Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations, Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees – 12/31/2017)
- **Strategy 5.3.8:** Increase awareness of planned giving opportunities (Vice President for Advancement – Ongoing)
- **Strategy 5.3.9:** Secure at least two new commitments each year (Board of Trustees, President, and Vice President for Advancement – Ongoing)
Goal 6: Erskine purposefully stewards its physical resources and the technologies needed to support its mission

Objective 6.1: Operate and maintain physical facilities that appropriately serve the needs of the institution’s educational programs and support services

Strategy 6.1.1: Appoint a joint faculty Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies (Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs – 12/31/2012)

Strategy 6.1.2: Conduct an annual review of the Master Plan to assess progress and make needed changes until the planned full review and revision scheduled for 2018 (Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations & Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies – Annual)

Strategy 6.1.3: Conduct an annual review of the Facilities Condition Assessment Report to identify deferred maintenance projects and priorities to be included in the annual budget process (Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations and Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies – Annual)

Strategy 6.1.4: Review and take action on Aramark surveys measuring customer satisfaction regarding work orders, the condition of facilities, and overall response time (Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations and Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies – Semi-Annual)

Objective 6.2: Adapt the infrastructure of the library to meet current and emerging needs

Strategy 6.2.1: Conduct a review of the relevant literature related to libraries at liberal arts colleges and examine organizational structures and practices on campuses similar to Erskine (Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies – 5/31/2014)

Strategy 6.2.2: Conduct a needs assessment of Erskine students, faculty and staff (Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies – 5/31/2014)

Strategy 6.2.3: Provide recommendations to the Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs (Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies – 5/31/2014)

Strategy 6.2.4: Create an implementation timeline (Cabinet – 8/31/2014)

Objective 6.3: Maximize use of campus facilities each summer

Strategy 6.3.1: Conduct an audit of campus resources available for summer programs (Summer Programs Coordinator – 12/31/2012)

Strategy 6.3.2: Conduct a needs assessment of current groups and potential future groups (Summer Programs Coordinator – 5/31/2013)

Strategy 6.3.3: Develop a marketing plan for summer programs at Erskine (Summer Programs Coordinator, Vice President for Communications – 8/31/2013)

Strategy 6.3.4: Increase summer gross revenue by 150% (Summer Programs Coordinator – 8/31/2017)

Objective 6.4: Erskine’s environmental stewardship program is known and utilized by the campus community

Strategy 6.4.1: Present at least two educational programs related to environmental stewardship per year (Chair of Sustainability Committee – Ongoing)

Strategy 6.4.2: Participate in RecycleMania and provide campus with passive educational programs (Chair of Sustainability Committee – Ongoing)

Strategy 6.4.3: Grow campus recycling from 28% to 35% (Chair of Sustainability Committee – 12/31/2017)

Strategy 6.4.4: Reduce energy consumption by at least 10% over the next five years (Chair of Sustainability Committee – 12/31/2017)

Strategy 6.4.5: Reduce water consumption by at least 10% over the next five years (Chair of Sustainability Committee – 12/31/2017)

Strategy 6.4.6: Assess the extent to which alternative energy is feasible for Erskine (Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations – 12/31/2014)

Objective 6.5: Operate and maintain technologies that appropriately serve the needs of the institution’s educational programs and support services

Strategy 6.5.1: Create a five-year technology plan for the campus in consultation with the President and the Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations (Director of Information Technology & Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies – 12/31/2013)

Strategy 6.5.2: Conduct an annual technology needs and satisfaction assessment with students, faculty, and staff (Director of Information Technology & Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies – Annual)

Strategy 6.5.3: Conduct a staffing assessment to determine optimum IT organizational chart to meet campus needs (Director of Information Technology & Committee for Campus Facilities and Technologies – 12/31/2013)