



St. Olaf Strategic Planning “Agile” Innovation Team Charge

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Charge:

The successful liberal arts colleges of the future will be those that are agile, taking strong, decisive, and urgent action over the next five years. Being able to adapt and proactively respond to change requires a better understanding of who we are: a culture that rewards and supports risk-taking and change with a laser-sharp focus on the vision of who we want to be. The college needs to begin now to reorient the academic profile, re-shape the campus work environment for staff, faculty and students, and re-assess the post-pandemic student experience driven by virtual communities, technology, and the need for a holistic development plan for each student. **The central question that this team will explore is: How can St. Olaf be an agile and forward-thinking institution that embraces a holistic development plan for each student?**

Key Tasks and Considerations:

1. Employers are increasingly seeking more lifelong skills – empathy, communication, cross-cultural competency, and synthesis thinking. St. Olaf should position itself as a place that successfully develops those skills in its graduates and that treats lifelong skills as anchors in current and future curricular decisions about adding or subtracting requirements and offerings.
2. Key to building the institution of the future is a rich, collaborative leadership model between the Board, President’s Leadership Team, faculty, and staff — a model that fosters collaboration while not stifling innovation and institutional agility. Reflecting our values and ethos, formal shared governance and informal, long-standing traditions of community engagement in decision-making will be central to our adaptability and collective success.

Connecting Themes:

1. **Mission:** Our mission statement is our promise to our students. Throughout our planning, our work will be mission-aligned. Our mission is:
“St. Olaf College challenges students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition.”
2. **DEIB:** The recommendations will advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts so all members of our St. Olaf community thrive and experience a genuine sense of belonging.

3. **Sustainability:** The recommendation will address a key question: how do we sustain St. Olaf's bright future in light of multiple national and global headwinds? The proposed action steps will encompass:
 - strategies to address inequities locally and globally
 - issues of environmental sustainability for this one precious Earth we inhabit
 - a financially sustainable approach that reaffirms our commitment to meeting the financial needs of our students and that provides fair and equitable compensation and benefits for our employees
 - the viability of our academic offerings
 - attention to our built, digital, and energy production infrastructure that undergirds all that we do on the Hill.

Key Questions to be addressed by the Agile Innovation Team:

1. How could we align the major, new Ole Core, StOGoals, NACE goals (already used by the Piper Center), and the work of the Piper Center to uplift the central role of vocation — “life on purpose for the common good” — in the Ole experience?
2. Should students have the opportunity to pursue a credential from the Piper Center after completing a course or set of courses successfully? Could the Ole Core lead to engagement with a series of stackable credentials that make the value of liberal education clearer and more compelling to students and employers?
3. Could we develop pathways (or “journeys” within the St. Olaf Pathway) that work backwards from business/industry expectations or standards to encompass work in the major, additional credentials, and co-curriculars parallel with content alignment and business/industry sectors?

For example, what if a student were able to take a course in the bioeconomy (interdisciplinary – economics, biology, chemistry, public policy, and other fields) or ESGs (environmental studies, economics/finance, sociology, political science, and other fields) followed by a credentialing opportunity through the Piper Center that has been developed in collaboration with the sector partner and leads to a LinkedIn credential and opportunity to interview for an internship within the sector?

Resources:

- Coordination Team (Susan Rundell Singer, Louis Epstein, Michael Kyle)
- Enoch Blazis (Vice President for Advancement)
- Reginald Miles (Interim Vice President for Equity and Inclusion)
- Relevant constituencies: students, staff, faculty, alumni