



St. Olaf Strategic Planning “Sustainable” Innovation Team Charge

Co-Conveners: Chris George '94 and Allison Luedtke

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Charge:

What makes us sustainable as a college is our ability to attract students and fulfill our mission. To attract students, we have to offer a distinctive learning experience that aligns with what students are looking for long into the future. Much of St. Olaf's distinctive identity is found in the work of the Piper Center, the Taylor Center, the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community, the Smith Center, and the Institute for Freedom and Community. We are at a critical moment in society where the values championed by our centers and the institute are a critically needed lens for understanding, compassion, and personal well-being. These vessels provide a unique means to expand conversations on values and to manifest those commitments through programmatic integration and thoughtful community engagement. Our centers and the institute have an opportunity to play a stronger role as interdisciplinary hubs, focusing and highlighting institutional values through an academic and co-curricular lens, thereby elevating the institution's commitment to whole-person education. The guiding question that this team will explore is: **How can our distinctive centers and institute contribute to a holistic, four-year pathway for our students and a growth experience for our faculty and staff?**

Key Tasks and Considerations:

1. Our students want a relevant, academically excellent liberal arts education that prepares them to contribute to the most pressing issues of our times. We need to mentor students to intentionally create their personalized pathway through their experiences in and out of the classroom and on and off the Hill.
2. The “Why” that is rooted in our Lutheran tradition makes us distinctive and provides a foundation on which to build.
3. We also need to build on opportunities outside our classrooms so that students can pursue the following with support from distinct, complementary campus resources:
 - a. Coursework within a major and beyond aligned with an issue that compels the student.
 - b. Leadership development (e.g., Athletics leadership pathway)
 - c. Research or work study or internship
 - d. Intercultural competence (DEIB)
 - e. Community/civic engagement
 - f. Global understanding
 - g. Collaboration/team building

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 Innovation Team:

1. What does it mean to be sustainable (broadly defined)? In what ways will St. Olaf continue to pursue excellence for the next five, 10, 50 years?
2. What competencies are needed to be a solution seeker?
3. How do our centers and the institute map onto core identified components of what it means to be a solution seeker? How do we explicitly integrate the centers and other programming in this important work?

Resources:

- Coordination Team (Susan Rundell Singer, Louis Epstein, Michael Kyle)
- Ryan Bowles (Athletic Director)
- Mike Berthelsen (Vice President for Business and Finance and Chief Financial Officer)
- Relevant constituencies: students, staff, faculty, alumni