



FINLANDIA

UNIVERSITY

where you belong

**PLAN
2021**



A learning community dedicated to academic
excellence, spiritual growth, and service.

PLAN 2021

As we imagine and plan for Finlandia University's 125th birthday in 2021, we draw upon the courage and imagination of those who have loved and led this learning community for well over a century. Our first thoughts are of gratitude and praise for those who have gone before and served so unselfishly—often in the midst of great adversity—her educational mission. We today, lead both humbled and inspired by their deep commitments and perseverance.

Our visioning activities over the past two years and more have reaffirmed that Finlandia's best self lies within. Plan 2021 does not so much seek to import strategic novelty as it does stir us to deeper and more deliberate expressions of our best self.

Plan 2021 represents, therefore, a more precise articulation, a more disciplined application, and a more rigorous assessment of our shared values and commitments. When such is achieved, our envisioned future becomes that singular lens through which we view the entirety of our life together. It becomes our reason for being. It defines us, unites us, inspires us and, ultimately sets us apart.

In 1946, at Suomi College's 50th anniversary celebration, President V.J. Nikander commented, "Now ... Suomi faces a future which contains more than the usual number of uncertainties ... the need for a view to Suomi's place as an American educational institution is urgent ... Suomi must set her sights high." President Nikander's comments are as relevant now as they were in those post-war years. Today, through shifting and even colliding currents in North American higher education, Plan 2021 charts a daring course for firmly establishing Finlandia's place in higher education and for realizing her highest aspirations.


Philip Johnson, President



SIGNATURE GOALS

With bold visioning we have imaged Finlandia's best self. With rigorous planning we have charted a course for its fullest realization. We will, with collective resolve, work to realize its signature commitments and goals:

- become more fully a learning community inspired and set apart by a clear and compelling vision
- advance expansive learning that best prepares graduates for the 21st-century workplace and world
- meet and exceed rigorous standards for financial health and resilience
- enroll 700+ students who persist and graduate at historically high rates
- become a full member of a NCAA Division III regional conference
- carry a strong brand and reputation locally and regionally
- enhance and expand instructional, residential, and athletics facilities
- establish a thoroughgoing culture of assessment for continuous improvement



INTRODUCTION

STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

Plan 2021 consists of several documents. This executive summary provides the broad architecture of the Plan. It presents foundational language and categories: vision, rationale, and university commitments. Companion documents align with and support these institution-wide categories with goals and implementation strategies including: campus planning templates, branding style guide, unit-level plans, timelines, and financial projections.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

There are four areas of campus activity and leadership that are responsible for the successful implementation and continuous assessment of Plan 2021. First, Finlandia's campus-wide committee structure has been redesigned to align with Plan 2021 to better facilitate its implementation. Second, Finlandia's institutional planning council consists of campus committee leadership and other staff responsible for unit-level planning. These monthly, campus-wide leadership meetings will provide accountability and ensure continuous coordination of Plan 2021's implementation. Third, Plan 2021 components are reviewed at weekly management meetings of the president and vice presidents. Finally, Finlandia's board of trustees conducts an annual comprehensive review.

SEQUENCE AND PACE

Plan 2021 does not unfold evenly across its seven-year span. It calls for aggressive implementation on the front end. Capital projects needed to fuel and absorb projected enrollment growth are placed earliest in the timelines. Financing strategies to complete these projects have been identified and are currently being implemented. Facility improvements and expansion in the first 24 months of the plan include the College of Health Sciences, main campus science labs, the Paavo Nurmi fitness center, and expansion of the Finlandia Athletics Complex: a fieldhouse, stadium, and multi-purpose practice facility. Adequate financing and timely completion of these front-end construction projects is crucial for achieving short- and long-term enrollments goals.





PLAN 2021

CONTEXT

The architecture, categories, and language found in Plan 2021 have evolved from visioning and planning exercises that reach back several years. Over forty campus discussions and dozens of meetings including those of trustees, campus leadership, advisory groups, students, alumni, and community partners have taken place since fall 2010. Our earliest conversations imagined our learning community more deliberately organized around the whole learner—engaging students in their entirety—mind, heart, and body. These earliest considerations remain at the center of Plan 2021.

The future for higher education in general, and Finlandia University in particular, presents significant challenges and, at the same time, holds great promise. Most fully achieving the latter requires more fully grasping the former which is marked by shifting student demographics and college readiness, increased federal oversight and legislation, a slower economic recovery, public scrutiny, escalating costs, and new delivery systems. Plan 2021, in its broadest expressions, as well as in the more detailed strategies and timelines found in campus unit plans, is informed by these trends and shifts in higher education as well as their calculated impact on Finlandia's context.

Moreover, Plan 2021 inherits the achievements of its predecessor plan in areas of board governance, finance and debt management. It also takes up again those areas which underachieved: enrollment, institutional image, facilities, and assessment. These strategic areas are given priority attention in Plan 2021. Enrollment growth is the chief area of concern. Previous enrollment goals were not achieved when program launches were deferred. Plan 2021 contains a rigorous new program launch sequence that is able to have immediate and enduring positive impact on enrollment. Disciplined implementation is necessary to achieve the enrollment goals Finlandia envisions.

IDENTITY

VISION distinctive • whole • engaged

RATIONALE

DISTINCTIVE: It is our conviction that Finlandia's distinct contribution to higher education is linked to and shaped by her distinct story: an institution in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, planted by Finnish Lutheran immigrants, deeply committed to preparing men and women for meaningful work and responsible citizenship in their new context. Plan 2021 wishes to more deliberately draw upon themes and values inherent in Finlandia's ethnic and spiritual heritage that speak meaningfully to our diverse community today. Finlandia desires to more fully embrace and evolve her distinctives, not jettison them, to be fully rooted in her story and yet fully relevant to the world, an aspiration we hold for each of our students as well.

WHOLE: Plan 2021 imagines what a more thoroughgoing wholeness looks like as an organizing principal for our learning community. It resists fragmentation and urges wholeness and integration among and within institutional structures. Furthermore, it takes seriously the whole learner—mind, heart, and body. It insists on outcomes that take seriously students in their entirety and learning in its complexity.

ENGAGED: Finlandia's identity is also fundamentally shaped by geography. Her location among the rural communities of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan urges strong engagement with her closest neighbors. Our futures are intertwined. Plan 2021 imagines a larger and deeper educational, cultural, and economic imprint on neighboring communities and region.

UNIVERSITY COMMITMENTS

- become a thoroughly vision-inspired learning community by infusing our highest aspirations for distinctiveness, wholeness, and engagement into each expression of Finlandia's community: posture, people, programs, physical plant, and policies
- more deliberately accompany—as a whole learning community—the whole student toward a whole life
- embrace cultural diversity and evolve ideas and ideals in Finnish American and Finnish culture that meaningfully enrich student life, encourage student growth, and promote academic success
- encourage diverse spiritual expression found in all traditions and those valued in ELCA Lutheran faith and practice: *vocatio*—life as a calling, openness to all, service, freedom to pursue all knowledge, and bold questioning
- lead with others to create those conditions in which neighboring communities may grow and thrive: offering affordable private higher education, modeling shared sustainability practices, and contributing to the region's economic and cultural vitality

ACADEMICS

VISION advance expansive learning that best prepares graduates for the 21st-century workplace and world

RATIONALE

It is our conviction that in order to flourish in the 21st-century workplace and world our graduates need to acquire a breadth of intellectual capacities and professional competencies as well as a blend of matured human qualities. Knowledge acquisition and skills development are essential and yet essentially inadequate for earning employer confidence, advancing careers, or for that matter, building an enduring vision of humanity. The growing expectation in the workplace as well as the persistent need in the world is matured personhood.

It is also our conviction that personal wholeness and a sense of belonging enliven the college experience and elevate student learning outcomes. We believe that learning pursued in community is higher education at its best.

Finlandia has always valued community-enriched higher education marked by a personalized blend of student support and challenge. Our practice of uncommon attention is shared by our whole learning community of faculty, staff, and administrators.

Moreover, students excel and thrive when learning in an environment that deliberately engages them as whole human beings—mind, heart, and body—that advances expansive learning, and that fosters enduring positive change in how they think, act, and feel in matters of the self, others and the wider world. Finlandia's vision for expansive learning is served by our commitments to deliver human-centered higher education that is relationship-driven, holistic, and transformative.

UNIVERSITY COMMITMENTS

- **FACULTY:** recruit and retain highly credentialed and guild-active faculty who demonstrate a love for teaching and a desire and capacity to engage students in their entirety
- **TEACHING AND LEARNING:** advance teaching and learning that is relationship-driven, holistic, and transformative in order to stimulate and develop intellectual exploration, vocational discernment, and professional identity and confidence
- **CURRICULUM:** build visible and measurable expressions of three core curriculum qualities: 1) coherence within and among curricula; 2) innovation marked by interdisciplinarity, experiential learning, and flexibility; and 3) responsiveness to workforce needs and graduate study expectations
- **STRUCTURE:** design a comprehensive academic structure that best supports student learning, operational efficiency, relatedness among disciplines, shared governance, and continuous improvement

STUDENTS

VISION

grow our learning community with academically successful, socially responsible, and community engaged students

RATIONALE

We have both a need and an opportunity for growing our learning community. Our potential for this growth is best achieved through a strategic blend of co-curricular and curricular offerings. The rationale for leading with NCAA Division III athletics includes:

- new athletics program launches hold the greatest potential for near-term and sustainable tuition revenue increases at Finlandia;
- expanding athletics programming and gaining the benefits of membership to a regional conference will better support student learning and strengthen Finlandia's regional market position; and
- NCAA Division III student-athlete philosophy accompanies Finlandia's historic mission and envisioned future for educating the whole student—mind, heart, and body.

Once enrolled, Finlandia's students persist at higher levels when they are academically successful and meaningfully connected to campus and community. Through student success and student life activities Finlandia creates multiple points of contact that not only encourage persistence. They also offer layers of support and challenge that foster a matured identity, self-confidence, and personal well-being.



UNIVERSITY COMMITMENTS

STUDENT ENROLLMENT: grow and sustain enrollment over 700 by achieving new levels of effectiveness in and coordination among the following five areas of strategic activity:

- new academic and co-curricular programming led by 9 new launches in NCAA Division III Athletics
- tuition pricing and financial aid leveraging
- marketing and branding for targeted student populations
- admissions processes and new student recruitment strategies
- student retention programs

STUDENT SUCCESS: improve Finlandia's rates in all key student success indicators including student retention and first-time, full-time graduation

STUDENT LIFE: offer robust and coordinated campus programming that generates high levels of student engagement, builds a strong sense of community, and fosters leadership development, multi-cultural awareness, habits of service, spiritual growth, and personal well-being

IMAGE

VISION hold the most recognized university brand in the Upper Peninsula

RATIONALE

Finlandia has a very compelling story to tell. Plan 2021 contains strategies for more effectively packaging and delivering her story in ways that build recognition and affinity. Acquiring a marketing partner to initially lead and manage a new brand initiative was central to this strategy.

Effectively marketing Finlandia's value, quality, and opportunity in higher education will reinforce and enhance her regional reputation among prospective students and their families. Finlandia is the Upper Peninsula's only private, church-affiliated institution. Finlandia alone offers NCAA Division III programs and a commitment to expansive learning in the liberal arts tradition. These and other qualities define Finlandia's intrinsic and market value.

Finlandia serves the common good not only by conferring degrees. Our learning community serves by leading in cultural, political, and economic affairs. Plan 2021 calls for enlarging Finlandia's imprint and building greater awareness of her commitment to enhance the quality of life for those living in the Upper Peninsula and northern Great Lakes region.

A stronger image and reputation off campus, however, begins with strong brand identity on campus. Finlandia has devoted much time and energy in building a shared vision for our future. We honor this good work when we, with equal devotion, apply initiatives and strategies needed to embed it fully and firmly in our life together as a learning community.

UNIVERSITY COMMITMENTS

- Create, design, and deliver a clear, consistent, and compelling institutional brand to capture a stronger market position
- Earn a strong local and regional reputation for higher education value, quality, and opportunity
- Reinforce brand identity on campus among students, faculty, and staff

RESOURCES

VISION institutional health and resilience through good stewardship, investment, and capacity-building

RATIONALE

Responsible stewardship of Finlandia's resources is central to Plan 2021. Finlandia's facilities, their maintenance and renovation, earn a central place. In an increasingly competitive higher education market, Finlandia's future is severely weakened with aging buildings and deferred maintenance. Plan 2021 calls for major investments to address this need.

Fiscal responsibility through careful planning and cost management become increasingly important as Finlandia embarks on an aggressive expansion plan. A key stewarding document that accompanies Plan 2021 is a pro forma and its exhibits. These documents provide vital projections in revenues and expenditures, plan assumptions, and risks and mitigants that are related to planned plant and program expansion and debt consolidation.

Advancement strategies within Plan 2021 drive capacity-building in three critical areas: operating, capital, and endowment. Advancement growth is essential for supporting new operating costs and funding new capital projects.

Finlandia's greatest asset is her people. Faculty, staff, and administrators at Finlandia care deeply about students, their success, and their personal and professional growth. Recruiting and retaining the very best for our students urges supportive structures for all employees that nurture well-being and meaningfulness in work. Moreover, proper stewardship of board governance and campus leadership is foundational to any institution's success. Board composition, structure, operations, and development require regular review for continuous improvement. Regular application of best practices in campus leader assessment and development are essential.

UNIVERSITY COMMITMENTS

- **CAMPUS GROWTH:** update, renovate, and build campus facilities needed to best support student success and absorb enrollment and program growth—including instructional spaces, athletics and wellness, and student life
- **PERSONNEL:** gain local and regional recognition as a preferred employer by setting achievable goals for competitive compensation, attractive benefits packages, and personnel policies and services that foster well-being and a sense of belonging
- **FINANCES:** show continuous and measurable improvement in the following: annual budget processes, audit reports, financial ratio scores, net tuition increases, and debt management
- **ADVANCEMENT:** enlarge the capacity to achieve operating, capital, and endowment fund growth through increased annual fund giving, targeted major gift strategies, and planned gift solicitation
- **LEADERSHIP:** build leadership capacity at all university levels through improved orientation, mentoring, professional development, and succession planning

EFFECTIVENESS



VISION a thoroughgoing culture of assessment

RATIONALE

Plan 2021 intentionally singles out continuous improvement for dedicated goals and strategies in order to establish a more thoroughgoing culture of assessment across campus. Within Finlandia's learning environments is a caring responsiveness to student learning. Course syllabi and classroom pedagogies are continuously enhanced to meet the learning needs of our students and emerging expectations of the workplace. We will build on this foundation and the strong assessment practices evident among certain programs in order that they be equally evident across all programs. Our commitment to whole student learning across campus will shape a new set of institutional outcomes that identifies, measures, and assesses a fuller range of competencies and qualities needed in the 21st century.



UNIVERSITY COMMITMENTS

- **CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT:** provide leadership and resources to organize, orient, and support campus-wide assessment understanding and best practices
- **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** redesign Finlandia's institutional student outcomes document to more deliberately recognize renewed commitments to engage the whole learner and to learning across campus
- **INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT PLAN:** mindful of the vision and commitments expressed in Plan 2021, design, implement, and support a plan that more fully embeds and regularizes assessment across campus
- **PERSONNEL EVALUATION:** strengthen and regularize annual performance evaluation tools and practices

