Stonehill College

Strategic Plan

2021 – 2025

Mission

Stonehill College, a Catholic institution of higher learning founded by the Congregation of Holy Cross, is a community of scholarship and faith, anchored by a belief in the inherent dignity of each person.

Through its curriculum of liberal arts and sciences and pre-professional programs, Stonehill College provides an education of the highest caliber that fosters critical thinking, free inquiry and the interchange of ideas.

Stonehill College educates the whole person so that each Stonehill graduate thinks, acts, and leads with courage toward the creation of a more just and compassionate world.

Vision

We will live out our Holy Cross mission by continuing to build a more diverse and inclusive community that celebrates difference, fosters a sense of belonging and respects the inherent dignity of each person. We will continue to challenge students to discover pathways that lead to personal fulfillment, professional accomplishment and lives of meaning and purpose, both at Stonehill and beyond. Building on a strong foundation in the liberal arts, we will introduce a suite of new undergraduate degree programs in applied arts and sciences and an array of graduate degree offerings which aim to engage with the pressing needs and questions of our time and connect with our mission of educating toward ethics and social responsibility. Building on our success, our strategy will grow the demand for a Stonehill education and position us to become a top regional university in the Northeast.

Background and context

Higher education is undergoing a period of change that promises to have profound implications for colleges and universities, not to mention students and society, for years to come. A variety of factors are at play. Even before the onset of the current pandemic, demographers had been warning of a coming decline in the number of high school graduates, due in large part to a drop in birth rates in the wake of the Great Recession. Schools in the Northeast will be hardest hit, intensifying already fierce competition for a smaller pool of students. And with the sudden rise of severe economic hardship due to the pandemic coupled with rising levels of college tuition, many prospective students are unable to pay. Still others, calling into question the value of a college degree, are less willing.

There is, however, reason for optimism. Most Americans express broad support for continued investment in higher education, citing not only the private benefit of a college degree, but the public one as well. Similarly, an overwhelming majority of the nation's business executives and hiring managers indicate that a college degree is worth the time and money invested. In addition, those pursuing a college education are more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before. And advances in technology are enabling colleges and universities to engage students in ways that were impossible just a few years ago.

In the midst of such change, a sense of enthusiasm has prevailed at Stonehill. Under its current strategic plan, the College launched several new undergraduate and graduate programs in response to growing student interest in a number of disciplines. As it did, the College organized its academic offerings into the May School of Arts & Sciences and the Meehan School of Business and constructed two new buildings to provide a home for each. And the College's *Think. Act. Lead.* program, launched five years ago, continues to leverage the very essence of Stonehill's mission to position every student for success and for lives of meaning and purpose.

Stonehill's mission is also at work in its ongoing efforts to build a community that celebrates diversity and that instills in each one a sense of belonging. Toward that end, diversity and inclusion efforts are driving change throughout the College, from the conference room to the classroom. And that same desire to forge a better community has been matched by an increasingly forward-thinking mindset, one that has inspired initiatives such as the Collaboratory for Innovative Design, the Digital Learning lab, a new Photonics program and a reimagining of the general education program, which continues to unfold.

It is in this spirit that we look ahead to the next five years. Yes, the higher education landscape, and the world at large, are filled with challenges, both old and new. But they are also replete with opportunity. And while change often comes with great uncertainty, new heights of success can often be found on the other side. As we embrace the initiatives outlined in this strategic plan, we embark together on a vision for the future. Staying true to our core mission of educating hearts and minds, we will capitalize on the promise of tomorrow as we endeavor to bring about a more just and compassionate world.

Academic Program

Stonehill will expand bachelor's and master's degree program offerings in fields with growing student interest and rewarding career paths.

Key Goals

- ➢ **Engineering**

  - o Develop and launch a program in engineering science for students seeking a broad knowledge base in the field and that serves as a gateway for later entry into one of the College's specialized engineering programs.

  Cohorts of 10 students by 2025

  - o Develop and launch undergraduate programs in electrical, computer, and laser/optical engineering.

  Cohorts of 5-10 students each by 2025

  - o Develop and launch a master's degree program in engineering management for professionals preparing to advance to leadership positions in the field.

  Cohorts of 10-15 students by 2025

- ➢ **Other academic programs**

  - o Create new undergraduate programs that meet student interest and build on the strength of existing programs.

  3 new programs by 2025

  - o Develop and launch additional graduate programs, including 4+1 programs that strengthen the College's enrollment efforts while offering compelling opportunities to first-year students.

  1-3 new programs by 2025

- ➢ **Program and course delivery**

  - o Meet the unique needs of graduate students by offering programs of study with a blend of online and campus-based learning.

  - o Enhance online and hybrid learning opportunities for undergraduate students throughout the academic year.

  Online learning enhancements in place by 2021

  - o Leverage technology by continuing to implement the College's digital strategy in support of 21st century teaching, learning and scholarship.

  - o Build faculty and staff learning communities and professional development opportunities focused on college student learning styles as well as cognitive and non-cognitive student development.

  - o Continue to expand dual enrollment opportunities for area public and private high school students.

  5-10 dual enrollment partnerships by 2025

Student Life and Success

Students will enjoy expanded opportunities to engage in the life of the College as members of a community that challenges, encourages and equips them to succeed at Stonehill and beyond.

➢ **Enrollment**

- o Expand the integrated branding/marketing communication plan to broader regional and national audiences. Increase focused video content development, social media advertising, and broadcast media placements.

- o Create defined and accessible degree completion pathways for community college students designed to offer a competitive private alternative to the public university transfer option.

- o Elevate Stonehill's market perception by continuing to reduce the acceptance rate by working with the College's direct marketing and financial aid leveraging partners.

➢ **Student success**

- o Demonstrate the College's commitment to the academic and professional success of each student by reorganizing Stonehill's academic support and co-curricular achievement offices into a unified Student Success Collaborative, eventually co-locating each office into a Student Success Center.

- o Investigate leading approaches to student learning and utilize a combination of professional staff and peer leaders to offer scalable, impactful support services to improve key metrics of success including graduation rates, retention, and post-graduate career outcomes. Strategies will include academically themed summer transition programs, Quick-Term courses, enhanced integration of the First Year Experience Course into an overall four-year academic excellence and career development co-curricular program, and expanded delivery of services to a growing population of undeclared and undecided students.

- o Create a dynamic digital interface that provides students with consistent, accessible, and transparent feedback on their engagement. Provide integrated communications, updates and support options to streamline collaboration among students, staff, and faculty.

Key Goals

Grow application draw rate beyond 10:1

Grow new transfer students to 70 annually

65% admit rate by 2025

Student Success Center by 2024

First-to-second year retention of ≥ 87%

➢ **New athletic programs**

- o Provide new co-curricular activities to support enrollment management strategies, enhance student engagement, community building and branding efforts by launching varsity athletic programs in women's swimming, women's ice hockey and men's lacrosse.

- o Expand opportunities for students with an interest in the rapidly expanding world of e-sports.

➢ **Community**

- o Fully implement a residential curriculum built on the five Holy Cross Pillars by facilitating individual conversations and providing engagement opportunities focused on developing interpersonal skills and an appreciation for the inherent dignity of each person.

- o Expand special interest living and learning environments to allow students with shared academic interests or philosophical values to build intentional communities.[1]

- o Invest in the College's residence halls in ways that cultivate a sense of community and belonging, and that meet the expectations of price conscious students and their families.

- o Assess the current delivery model for counseling services and trainings; partner with the JED Foundation to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to address student mental health needs.

- o Embrace the growing commuter student population by investing in improved space, resources and support for this essential part of our campus community.

Women's Swimming by fall 2020

Women's Ice hockey by fall 2022

Men's Lacrosse by spring 2024

Sense of belonging and satisfaction assessment[1]

Create a plan to address student mental health needs by 2021

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[1] 90% of responding students strongly agree or agree with the statement "I feel a sense of belonging in my residence hall." 89% of responding students strongly agree or agree with the statement "I am satisfied with my overall residential experience." (Residential Experience Survey, 2019)

Diversity

Stonehill will continue to build a more diverse and inclusive community that respects the inherent dignity of each person and that lives out the ideals of the mission of the College.

Key Goals

- ➢ **Our students**

  - o Grow partnerships and commit to cohort agreements with regional, national, and high school-based community organizations with demonstrated commitments to diversity and inclusion.

  - o Develop a multi-year retention plan for students of color and international students.

- ➢ **Faculty and the curriculum**

  - o Continue ongoing efforts to diversify the faculty by employing practices that bring more diverse applicant pools and faculty hires and that retain them over time.

  - o Infuse diversity into the curriculum and invite students to engage with the perspectives, ideas and experiences of diverse populations and underrepresented groups across the disciplines.[2]

  - o Reinforce the College's commitment to inclusive excellence in teaching, learning and scholarship by launching the Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity and Social Justice.

- ➢ **Our community**

  - o Continue efforts to bring diverse perspectives and representation to the membership of Stonehill's senior leadership team and Board of Trustees.

  - o Continue to diversify the College's staff by employing practices that bring more diverse applicant pools and employees and that retain them over time.

  - o Continue to engage members of the Stonehill Community in professional development opportunities that affirm the College's commitment to a diverse and inclusive community.[3]

  - o Develop a communications strategy that keeps the community informed on progress made in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Sustained enrollments from partner organizations >25% of class

First-to-second year retention of ≥ 87%

Multi-year retention plan; monitor employment metrics

Valuing diversity of persons and cultures[2]

Launch the Center by FY 2022

Growth in number of persons of color serving on Board

Multi-year retention plan; monitor employment metrics

"My colleagues, supervisor and senior leadership are culturally competent"[3]

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[2] 77% and 68% of students indicate that their Stonehill experience had a very high or high impact on their ability to "value more the diversity of persons and cultures" (2018 and 2019 Senior Exit Surveys, respectively)

[3] 68% of employees strongly agree or agree with the statement "My colleagues, supervisor and senior leadership are culturally competent" (Employee Survey, Spring 2018)

o Foster a sense of community and belonging by forming additional voluntary resource groups for faculty and staff who share common interests and backgrounds.

o Increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the Alumni Council and its committees.

Mission and Organizational Effectiveness

Faculty and staff will preserve the core of Stonehill's mission while endeavoring to lead, innovate and collaborate in ways that meet the demands of an ever-changing environment.

➢ **Mission**

o Enhance students' engagement with Stonehill's Holy Cross identity by expanding opportunities in areas such as the HOPE program and special interest housing.[4]

o Continue to create opportunities for faculty and staff to interact with the mission of the College through service, collaborations with other Holy Cross colleges and universities, and other initiatives.

o Invite Stonehill alumni to renew and enhance their participation in mission-related events such as service immersion programs and pilgrimages to Holy Cross sites around the world.

➢ **Leadership and professional development**

o Launch a program that prepares individuals for leadership opportunities by developing and enhancing skills in the areas of communication, planning, team formation and other leadership essentials.

o Provide employees with expanded professional development opportunities that promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

o Assess and enhance Stonehill's new employee performance management program.

➢ **Innovation, communication and collaboration**

o Move forward with a formal, college-wide innovation agenda that embeds innovative thinking and practice into the work and life of the College.[5]

Key Goals

Recognizing the inherent dignity of all persons[4]

Program assessment

Assessment and enhancement by 2022

"There is a culture of innovation on campus"[5]

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[4] 81% and 76% of students indicate that their Stonehill experience had a very high or high impact on their "ability to recognize the inherent dignity of all persons" (2018 and 2019 Senior Exit Surveys, respectively)

[5] 48% strongly agree or agree with the statement "There is a culture of innovation on campus" (Planning Survey, Fall 2018)

- o Enhance communication throughout the College by developing mechanisms that promote, enable and infuse transparency and dialogue in the decision-making process.

- o Continue to find ways to streamline internal communication by focusing efforts at the inter- and intra-departmental levels with an eye toward enhancing collaboration.[6]

➢ **Resources and effectiveness**

- o Conduct a comprehensive review of Stonehill's cost structure in order to identify cost savings opportunities. Target additional cost savings through the reimagining of business processes, the creative use of technology and strategic partnerships.

- o Consider the use of zero-based budgeting and other practices that foster budgetary discipline over time.

- o Build on the current success of the comprehensive fundraising campaign to secure support for scholarships, academic programs and other strategic initiatives.

- o Promote accountability by expanding the practice of formal, data-informed goal-setting and assessment throughout the College.

"How often are you encouraged to collaborate…"[6]

Operating margins of 2% - 3% by 2025

≥ $75M raised by December 2022

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[6] 62% are encouraged to collaborate within their departments "most of the time or always." 42% are encouraged to collaborate with other departments "most of the time or always" (Employee Survey, Spring 2018).

Measures of Success

In addition to the input goals identified throughout this document, the College has identified a number of key input and outcome goals by which we will measure our success as we implement the strategic plan.

	Baseline	2025
Undergraduate program		
Admit rate[1]	69%	65%
Enrollment, full-time[1,2]	2,459	2,350 – 2,400
Retention, first-to-second year[1]	85%	≥ 87%
Graduation rate[1]	76%	≥ 80%
Post graduate outcomes rate[3]	90%	93%
Graduate program		
Enrollment, headcount[4]	76	160 - 240
Total number of graduate programs	3	4-6
Diversity		
Retention, first-to-second year[1,5]	79%	≥ 87%
Graduation rate[1,5]	63%	≥ 80%
Student engagement with others[6]	68%	≥ 72%
Financial position		
Operating margin[1]	2.9%	3.0% – 4.0%
Comprehensive campaign[7]	$53.2M	≥ $75M

[1] Current figure represents the most recent three-year average

[2] Current figure represents average of 2018, 2019 and 2020; average fall/spring

[3] Six months after graduation: actual is as of 2019; goal represents average over the planning period

[4] Baseline is as of Fall 2020; goal represents total when programs are fully phased in

[5] Rates for students of color

[6] National Survey of Student Engagement; seniors who "very often" or "often" had discussions with people of a race or ethnicity, an economic background, religious beliefs or political views other than their own.

[7] Current figure represents June 30, 2020; campaign is scheduled to end December 2022