

Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts



FYE 2022 Strategic Plan

Approved by Board of Trustees February 22, 2022

Preamble: Our Dawn Encounter

Dawn. A new start. A fresh beginning. After a dark night of weeping, Mary Magdalen encountered the risen Christ at dawn. This encounter not only took place in the morning, but it also marked the beginning of something much bigger—a new era—a new reality. Everything would now be seen in light of the Resurrection.

Magdalen College is poised for a dawn encounter of our own. We have emerged from our own dark night of organizational unrest and a pandemic, and we now embark on a new beginning—Our Dawn Encounter. We look to the future with a hope born of the Resurrection.

With fresh leadership and a reconstituted Board of Trustees, it is a fitting time to reflect deeply on our mission and vision and to identify our key goals for the next few years. At the request of the Board, and with the consulting assistance of Benjamin Case, we have sought the participation of many people to develop this Strategic Plan. Faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees provided initial input, and based on their feedback and suggestions, we drafted a provisional formulation of priorities and corresponding initiatives. This draft will continue to be developed and reviewed by faculty and staff as well as by Catholic leaders and other members of the local community. When ready, we will present this Strategic Plan to the Board for approval.

It will then be time for us to act—faculty, students, staff, trustees, alumni, Catholic and community leaders—for this to be Our Dawn Encounter.

Introduction

Magdalen College *calls students in their whole person to a transformative Catholic liberal arts education.*

We believe that this kind of education is good in itself and that it also prepares students well to face future challenges. In this sense, Magdalen College functions somewhat like the community of Rivendell in *Lord of the Rings*. Rivendell is a place of natural beauty and inspiration, where characters are equipped with strategic learning, council, conversation, and fellowship before setting out on a challenging mission to bring good to the world. Rivendell also housed artifacts that sustained significant memories of its people and their history.

Likewise, Magdalen calls students to a scenic, mountainside community where they are immersed in formative intellectual, spiritual, and social fellowship. They engage great texts and authors of the past and participate in sacred traditions and liturgies of the Church. Here students are trained to discern what is true, do what is good, love what is beautiful, articulate their convictions effectively, and serve God and others in their communities. Such formation—and, indeed, transformation—prepares them to pursue their callings and careers in an antagonistic culture. And it prepares them for an even higher goal: to share in the very life of the Triune God, the ultimate end for which we all are created.

When people think about where to go to college for deep learning, deep beauty, deep faith, and deep fellowship—and a college that will prepare them for the deep challenges of the future—we want them to first think about Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts. We seek to become known as the go-to place for launching students “out into the deep” with this sort of strategic foundation.

Educating the Whole Person for Freedom

Since her founding almost 50 years ago, Magdalen has provided an education ordered to human flourishing and the development of the whole person (Head, Heart, Hands). Each component serves the whole in a distinct way.

- Regarding the Head/intellectual life, Magdalen is first and foremost known for its commitment to the liberal arts, its thoughtful engagement with great books, and its unique humanities program. ACTA awarded the integrated curriculum a “Perfect A Rating.” The College boasts of an excellent faculty, not only in terms of their expertise, qualifications, and teaching, but also in terms of their care for students outside of the classroom.
- Regarding the Heart/affections, Magdalen seeks to point students’ desires in the direction of the true, good, and beautiful. Through reading and performing poetry in the classroom, celebrating reverent liturgies in the Chapel, and singing beautiful polyphonies in the student choir, Magdalen helps students not merely to understand goodness and beauty, but to desire it. As St. Augustine recognized, such an *ordo amoris* or right ordering of the loves is an essential task of education.
- Regarding the Hands/physical embodiment, learning at Magdalen is grounded not only in theory but also in practice. Students construct geometrical designs with compasses and straight edges; they create icons with wood and paint; they build stages, sets, and props with hammers and hinges; and they prepare the altar and serve during Mass. Magdalen’s work-study program helps many students take ownership of their education by conducting physical labor in the kitchen, on the grounds, and in our state-of-the-art greenhouse, and our sports fields and indoor gym enable students to stay physically fit in all seasons. Our New Hampshire setting enhances the whole-person education we provide by affording students mountains on which to hike, lakes on which to row, slopes on which to ski, and frozen ponds on which to skate.

Magdalen College is committed to the belief that this sort of well-rounded, whole-person, liberal arts education, grounded in a deep Catholic faith, leads to true freedom.

Staying True to Who We Are

As we look ahead to our 50th anniversary and beyond, we aim for Magdalen College to remain anchored to—but to continually improve in—the following marks of our identity:

- We are joyfully and faithfully Catholic;
- We love learning;
- We are personal and relational;
- We are sacramental;
- We are driven by wonder and awe;
- We are musical, poetic, and creative;
- We are discerning;
- We are a community of hospitality (intellectual, physical, social);
- We are outward-focused, serving God and working for the good of others and creation;
- We are reverent in worship;
- We are inspired by the natural beauty of our mountain home.

Our Strategic Priorities Over the Next 4 Years

With a “Perfect A”-rated¹ academic program, excellent faculty, beautiful liturgies, and an inspiring mountain setting, Magdalen College enjoys a solid foundation on which to build. We acknowledge and embrace the significant challenges that lie ahead. To achieve the rebirth of “our dawn encounter” over the next four years, we will have:

- A governing Board that is fully capable and stable,
- Committed financial partners,
- Up-to-date facilities that are attractive and inspiring,
- Students who are joyful and engaged,
- Strengthened connections with alumni, leaders, and members of the Catholic faith, and with leaders and citizens of the town of Warner and beyond.

Building on the good work of the past as well as the recent input provided by faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees, this strategic plan articulates five priorities with corresponding initiatives.

¹ *Awarded by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni

Strategic Priority 1

Develop and implement practices of good governance and management.

Highlighted Initiatives:

- Recruit trustees who understand, support, and appropriately engage the College's mission.
- Review and update the Bylaws, Articles of Agreement, and the Constitution to make the documents consistent with each other and conducive to good governance
- Develop, approve, and execute a comprehensive Strategic Plan.
- Improve institutional adherence to the College's governing documents, handbooks, and approved policies and procedures, and establish better management practices and policies where necessary.

Strategic Priority 2

Improve the financial stability of the College.

Highlighted Initiatives:

- Achieve total enrollment of 113 students by Fall of 2025 and agreed upon enrollment goals in the intervening years.
- Put in place best practices for the identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of prospects and donors.
- Establish a reasonable operational budget for each of the next four years.
- Review the operating expense budget quarterly and attempt to adjust to match revenue projections based on enrollment and fundraising data.
- Conduct financial contingency planning.

Strategic Priority 3

Renovate facilities and enhance the physical appearance of the College.

Highlighted Initiatives:

- Design and create a more welcoming environment both inside and outside.
- Update buildings and physical equipment and make necessary repairs where needed.

Strategic Priority 4

Strengthen a culture that helps to develop satisfied and engaged students and graduates.

Highlighted Initiatives:

- Achieve an annual retention rate of 93%.
- Promote ready access to and institutional support for student life activities.
- Provide an outstanding study-abroad experience for students that enables them to grow academically and spiritually while learning firsthand about the culture and history of a foreign country/city.
- Survey current students and graduates annually to determine their level of satisfaction and engagement with various aspects of the College.
- Continue to recruit, develop, and retain qualified faculty and staff who, in addition to demonstrating the desired skill and expertise in their particular discipline or field, also engage and care for students both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Support the creation of alumni communication/networking platforms and host an annual homecoming event for alumni.
- Recruit and develop graduate or professional school partnerships in various fields that provide pathways for Magdalen graduates.

Strategic Priority 5

Expand outreach and awareness of the College.

Highlighted Initiatives:

- Increase the number of prospective students and families who learn about Magdalen College
- Determine the most effective ways to communicate and engage with donors, alumni, and friends of the College, seeking to bring as many as possible to campus.
- Determine the most effective ways to raise awareness and engagement among local parishes, clergy, and Catholic institutions and individuals who would resonate with Magdalen's mission and identity
- Improve the College's level of awareness and engagement among local residents
- Expand awareness of the College among the general population
- Utilize more students in the College's marketing and outreach initiatives.