

Process for Department and Program Strategic Direction that Align with the University Strategic Directions

Begin with the end in mind.

The following pages are designed to support your department or program in developing its Strategic Direction. It is easy to feel overwhelmed or to make planning more complex than necessary. This process is intentionally simple and focused.

As you plan, use this template for your department or program: a concise, one-page, front-and-back Strategic Direction. We are not asking for lengthy plans or detailed narratives that capture everything you are thinking. Instead, remain at a high level and view this document as a practical guide that sets direction for daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly work.



_____ (insert department or program) Strategic Direction

Advancing

Student Success • Institutional Vitality • and World Engagement

_____ (insert name of department or program) strategic goals advance three interdependent priorities, **Student Success, Institutional Vitality, and World Engagement**, and are designed to be mutually reinforcing. Together, through these goals and measurable outcomes, clear accountability, and a shared framework for decision-making, we strengthen our _____ (insert department or program) and help the University achieve its goals.

1. (Start with one of the following words (Strengthen, increase, grow, develop, achieve, advance, lead or other action word) and (see university goals as a model for language).

Alignment: (insert one of the five goal numbers of the University, and/or priority area (student success, university vitality, world engagement).

Goal 1: By (add date), we will (add the what and measure (see university goal as an example).

Owner: (add the individual, not a group but the individual who is responsible for leading the team to achieve the goal)

Why: (see the university goals and why as an example)

Strategies: add the strategies, short brief directional actions to achieve the goal.

Key Metrics: (see university goal metrics as an example).

Collaborating Partners: (insert if your department/program will be collaborating with another group to achieve the goal).

Resources: How will you redeploy people, budget and equipment to achieve your goals?

Risks: Key risks; mitigation plan and checkpoints

Data/Reports: (what data or reports do you need monthly to evaluate your progress).

Add 1-2 additional goals using the same format as above. Develop no more than 5 goals.

As you need assistance or further input contact the cabinet member who oversees your department/program.

Strategic Direction Material **Referred to Departments and Programs**

Introduction and Purpose

The Strategic Direction Round Table Conversations brought together faculty, staff, students, alumni, trustees, donors, and community members to reflect deeply on Centenary University's future. These conversations surfaced both pride in what Centenary does best and urgency around the work required to strengthen student success, institutional vitality, and engagement with the world.

This document translates those insights into a shared framework of goals and recommended strategies. The five Strategic Direction goals represent university-wide commitments. The additional goals and strategies generated through the round tables provide guidance for departments and programs as they develop or refine their own strategic priorities. Together, they offer a clear, hopeful, and actionable path forward grounded in Centenary's mission, values, and lived experience.

University Five Goals

G1. Student Completion

By June 2028, Centenary will increase the number of graduating students by 10 percent and by an additional 5 percent annually, thereafter, as measured by total degrees conferred and undergraduate and postsecondary completion rates.

Owner: Vice President for Student Affairs

G2. Career and Life Success Planning

By December 2027, Centenary will ensure that at least 25 percent of enrolled students have an individualized career and life success plan supported by advising, mentoring, or experiential learning. Participation will increase by 25 percent annually to reach 75 percent of students by 2029.

Owner: Dean of Students

G3. Signature Program Excellence

By June 2030, Centenary will achieve top 10 percent regional performance among peer institutions of similar size in signature areas: business, criminal justice, equine studies, education, nursing, flourishing (Happiness Program), and four NCAA Division III sports.

Owners: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Director of Athletics

G4. Campus Master Planning

By June 2027, Centenary will develop and approve a 10-year campus master plan encompassing academic programs, facilities, infrastructure, grounds, and program-specific equipment, with clear annual benchmarks and funding targets.

Owner: Chief Financial Officer

G5. Purposeful Service and Engagement

By December 2028, Centenary, in addition to current service projects, will identify and launch five multi-year service initiatives demonstrating positive impact locally, nationally, or globally. These initiatives will engage students, faculty, staff, and alumni, with outcomes reported annually to the Board, campus, alumni, and donors.

Owner: President

Additional Goals Developed by the Round Table Conversations and Referred to Departments/Programs

A. Student Success

Goal A1. Retention

Improve first-year-to-second-year retention to 80 percent within three years.

Strategies

- Establish a First Year Success model that integrates advising, tutoring, wellness, and early alerts from Day 1.
- Launch peer mentoring and senior-to-first-year engagement programs, with participation and outcomes tracked.
- Reduce friction across the enrollment-to-start journey by shortening steps and cycle times that create delay or stress.
- Expand program-specific tutoring, supplemental instruction, and learning resources.

Goal A2. Career Outcomes

Achieve 95 percent knowledge-related employment or graduate placement within six months of graduation by Fall 2028.

Strategies

- Create a Career Development and Alumni Mentorship Program by Spring 2027, with a designated program lead, defined KPIs, and coordination across Academic Affairs, Career Services, and Advancement.
- Deepen employer partnerships for internships, micro-internships, and hiring pipelines, supported by program advisory boards.
- Integrate career development into the curriculum through industry lectures, classroom visits, and embedded assignments.

Goal A3. Process Clarity

Clarify and communicate key student-facing processes and procedures by Fall 2026.

Strategies

- Map and publish end-to-end student process guides for admissions, financial aid, billing, advising, and registration.
- Standardize service expectations, escalation paths, and ownership, with annual audits for clarity and consistency.
- Provide transparent updates to students, faculty, and staff regarding timelines and process changes.

B. University Vitality

Goal B1. Enrollment Growth

Increase applications, yield, and total enrollment by 15 percent by Fall 2027.

Strategies

- Maintain a fully staffed admissions team with ongoing program knowledge training and personalized outreach.
- Execute persona-based marketing and overhaul the website to center program clarity and the Centenary value proposition.
- Optimize financial aid for yield and retention, with early and transparent cost guidance.
- Strengthen orientation and onboarding to build belonging before Day 1.
- Formalize partnerships with high schools, community colleges, hospitals, and employers to strengthen pipelines and credentials.
- Increase community-facing events and student-centered social spaces to enhance visibility and connection.

Goal B2. Brand and Mission Alignment

Strengthen brand identity and mission alignment and launch a unified institutional story by academic year 2026–27.

Strategies

- Establish a Mission Narrative Lead or Story Council with representation from Marketing and Communications, Advancement, Academic Affairs, Student Life, and the Library and Archives.
- Increase the cadence and clarity of internal communications so all units speak with one voice.
- Activate student and alumni storytelling across digital platforms to highlight outcomes and distinctive strengths.

Goal B3. Faculty and Staff Experience

Improve faculty and staff engagement, satisfaction, and retention by academic year 2026–27.

Strategies

- Provide clear communication channels and feedback loops and share actionable responses.
- Publish accessible organizational charts, role clarity, and hiring updates.
- Offer leadership development, mentoring, and recognition programs, and celebrate incremental progress.
- Review workload alignment and wellbeing supports and communicate timelines for position reassessment.

Goal B4. Operations and Data Integrity

Achieve operational efficiency and data integrity improvements by June 2027.

Strategies

- Invest in IT training, streamline processes, and reduce duplicative systems.
- Standardize data definitions, dashboards, and governance to support timely and accurate decision making.

Goal B5. Financial Sustainability**Strategies**

- Grow the annual fund and endowment by approximately 10 percent per year through clear cases for support and defined giving vehicles.
- Explore tuition strategy in coordination with aid optimization and market analysis.

Goal B6. Facilities and Equipment**Strategies**

- Implement the 10-year campus plan.
- Identify funding sources and raise support over time.

C. World Engagement**Goal C1. Alumni Engagement**

Increase alumni engagement and participation by 15 percent and alumni communications effectiveness by 20 percent by Fall 2027.

Strategies

- Launch an alumni referral program supported by robust data capture and segmented communications.
- Expand alumni mentoring, internships, guest lectures, and employer introductions.
- Share impact stories that clearly connect giving to student outcomes.
- Encourage student and faculty community projects with measurable impact.

Goals Referred to Departments and Programs

The Strategic Direction Round Table Conversations generated constructive and important insights that now guide departmental and program planning across Centenary University. All five University Strategic Direction goals are to be incorporated into department and program strategic direction work. The additional goals and strategies developed through the round table conversations are to be reviewed and incorporated where they meaningfully connect to a department or program and advance student success, university vitality, and world engagement within a specific area.

Each department and program is assigned specific goals within the University Strategic Direction. Goals labeled with a “G” correspond to the five-university wide Strategic Direction goals (for example, G4 refers to Goal 4 of the University Strategic Direction). Goals labeled A, B, and C represent additional priorities that emerged from the round table conversations and are referred to specific departments and programs. The A goals relate to Student Success, the B goals to University Vitality, and the C goals to World Engagement.

All University Strategic Direction goals (the G goals) assigned to a department or program must be incorporated into that department or program Strategic Direction. The A, B, and C goals are provided for consideration and should be incorporated where they meaningfully advance the work of the area and align with its responsibilities. Departments and programs may also identify additional goals that reflect their unique role, strengths, and opportunities.

What follows identifies the goals most relevant to each department and program, along with the rationale, priority strategies, near term actions, and indicators of progress. The Department and Program Specific Goals and Questions section is intended to support completion of the Strategic Direction template found on page 4. If questions arise or clarification is needed, departments and programs should consult the cabinet member assigned to their area.

Find your Department or Program Area for the material to complete the template on page 4.

Finance and Administration

Relevant goals: G4, B4, B5, B6, B1

Why it matters: Financial resilience, data integrity, and a funded master plan will enable enrollment, retention, and program excellence.

Top strategies to act on

- Build the 10-year campus plan with cost ranges, phasing, and ROI screens (G4, B6).
- Consolidate platforms, standardize data definitions, and complete IT training (B4).
- Model tuition and discount strategies with Enrollment to optimize net tuition and yield (B1, B5).
- Create a rolling 24-month capital and equipment replacement schedule aligned to risk.

Indicators

- Operating margin, days cash on hand, net tuition per student, discount rate.
- Maintenance backlog trend and completion rate.
- Platform reduction count, data quality scorecards, IT training completion.
- How will our 10-year campus plan proposals improve student success, safety, and program excellence
- What sequencing of projects will deliver early wins and reduce risk in Years 1 and 2
- Where can we consolidate platforms and standardize data definitions to improve accuracy and reduce cost
- What tuition and discount scenarios will we model with Enrollment, and what sensitivities will we test

- What capital and equipment replacement schedule will we publish; what criteria will we use
- What three indicators will we track monthly: operating margin, days cash on hand, net tuition per student, discount rate, backlog trend, data quality

Human Resources

Relevant goals: B3, A1, A3, G2

Why it matters: Role clarity, engagement, and development accelerate retention and student success.

Top strategies to act on

- Publish updated org charts and role descriptions in a single hub (B3).
- Launch pulse surveys, forums, and a recognition program.
- Staff and schedule First-Year Success supports and mentoring (A1, G2).
- Provide change navigation and leadership development for managers.

Indicators

- Employee engagement and intent-to-stay. Internal fill rate and time-to-fill.
- Completion of org/role clarity artifacts. Utilization of recognition program.
- Retention of new hires at 12 months. Where does role clarity require immediate updates; what org charts and role descriptions will we publish in a central hub
- What pulse surveys, forums, and recognition actions will we implement; how will we share responses back to staff and faculty
- How will First Year Success supports and mentoring be staffed and scheduled
- What manager development and change navigation will we launch; what outcomes will we measure
- What indicators will we track: engagement, intent to stay, time to fill, internal fill rate, utilization of recognition, 12-month retention of new hires

Communications (Marketing and PR)

Relevant goals: B2, B1, C1, G5

Why it matters: A unified story and high-performing web funnel drive enrollment and engagement.

Top strategies to act on

- Stand up the Story Council; publish a brand and message playbook (B2).
- Overhaul website to clarify programs and value proposition; implement persona journeys (B1).
- Build storytelling pipelines for outcomes, service initiatives, and alumni voices (C1, G5).

Indicators

- Web engagement and inquiry conversion by persona and program.
- Message consistency checks and toolkit adoption
- Alumni communication volume, open/click rates, referrals attributable to campaigns
- How will we stand up the Story Council; what brand pillars and tone will we adopt across units
- Which top 10 programs require immediate web clarity; what persona journeys and content will increase conversion
- What pipeline of student outcomes, alumni features, and service initiative stories will we create; what content cadence will we follow
- What indicators will we track: web engagement and inquiry conversion by persona and program, message consistency, toolkit adoption, alumni open and click rates, referrals attributable to campaigns

Advancement

Relevant goals: B5, C1, G5, A2

Why it matters: Predictable giving and engaged alumni fuel scholarships, programs, and the master plan.

Top strategies to act on

- Establish a consistent annual fund vehicle (e.g., CU/1867 Fund) tied to visible outcomes.
- Launch alumni referral and mentorship programs with segmented comms (C1, A2).
- Prepare cases for support for the master plan and five service initiatives (G4, G5).

Indicators

- Annual fund and endowment growth, donor retention and upgrade rates.
- Alumni participation rate, mentor matches, employer partner count.
- Dollars raised toward master plan priorities and service initiative budgets.
- What annual fund vehicle and case for support will we use, and how will we tie giving to visible student outcomes
- How will we launch alumni referral and mentorship; what segments, incentives, and recognition will we apply
- Which campus plan priorities and service initiatives will we package into cases with gift tables and timelines
- What indicators will we track: annual fund and endowment growth, donor retention and upgrades, alumni participation rate, mentor matches, employer partner count, dollars raised to plan

Student Affairs

Relevant goals: A1, A3, G2, G5, B1

Why it matters: Belonging, clear processes, and experiential learning lift retention and growth.

Top strategies to act on

- Implement the First-Year Success model integrating advising, tutoring, wellness, early alerts (A1).
- Map and publish student process guides for admissions, aid, billing, advising, registration (A3).
- Expand peer and alumni mentoring. Build service-learning pathways that feed G5.

Indicators

- First-year retention and early-term alerts resolved.
- Student belonging, hope, and mattering indices.
- Process cycle time reductions and student satisfaction with services. How will we implement First Year Success with advising, tutoring, wellness, and early alerts from Day 1
- Which student process guides will we publish for admissions, aid, billing, advising, and registration; how will we train front-line staff
- What peer and alumni mentoring cohorts will we launch; what service learning pathways will contribute to multi-year initiatives
- What indicators will we track: first-year retention, early-term alerts resolved, belonging and hope indices, cycle time reductions, student satisfaction with services

Academics (General)

Relevant goals: G1, G2, A1, A2, A3, G3

Why it matters: Academic quality, advising, and career integration drive completion and outcomes.

Top strategies to act on

- Embed career development into curriculum; adopt program-specific employer talks and assignments (A2, G2).
- Expand tutoring and supplemental instruction; standardize early progress checks (A1).

- Clarify advising milestones and registration processes (A3).

Indicators

- DFW rates, gateway course success, term-to-term persistence.
- 6-month employment/grad placement and internship participation.
- On-time registration and advising milestone completion.
- Which courses will include embedded career tasks or industry engagement this year; what percent of students will complete these tasks
- What tutoring, supplemental instruction, and early progress checks will we standardize in 100 and 200 level courses
- What advising milestones and registration processes will we clarify and communicate; how will we measure on-time completion
- What indicators will we track: DFW rates, gateway course success, term-to-term persistence, internship participation, six-month employment or graduate placement, on-time registration and advising milestone completion

Academics (Specific Areas and Programs)

Applies to: Business, Criminal Justice, Equine Studies, Education, Nursing, Happiness/Flourishing

Relevant goals: G3, A2, C2

Why it matters: Signature program excellence differentiates Centenary and fuels demand.

Top strategies to act on

- Define peer set and top-10% benchmarks per program.
- Activate advisory boards; formalize employer pipelines and micro-internships.
- Document one employer-validated curriculum enhancement per program.

Indicators

- Benchmarks vs. peers, licensure/pass rates, internship density, employer satisfaction.
- Showcase placements and signature achievements in marketing.
- What peer set will we use; what top-10-percent regional benchmarks will define success
- What advisory board actions will we take this year; what employer pipelines and micro-internships will we formalize
- What one employer-validated curriculum enhancement will we implement; how will we assess impact
- What indicators will we track: benchmarks vs peers, licensure or pass rates where applicable, internship density, employer satisfaction, signature placements and achievements used in marketing

Athletics

Relevant goals: G3, B1, A1, C1, G5

Why it matters: Athletic success lifts recruitment, belonging, alumni engagement, and visibility.

Top strategies to act on

- Select four focus sports and define competitive and academic benchmarks (G3).
- Integrate student-athlete supports with FYE and tutoring (A1).
- Align athletics events with alumni engagement and service initiatives (C1, G5).

Indicators

- Team performance, recruiting yield by sport, student-athlete GPA and persistence
- Alumni attendance and giving tied to athletics
- Which four focus sports will we select; what competitive and academic benchmarks will we set
- How will we integrate student-athlete supports with First Year Success and tutoring
- Which alumni engagement and service projects will we align to home events and team traditions

- What indicators will we track: team performance, recruiting yield by sport, student-athlete GPA and persistence, alumni attendance and giving tied to athletics

Theater

Relevant goals: B2, B1, C2, C1, G3* (if designated as signature)

Why it matters: Theater showcases distinctive learning, drives brand storytelling, and builds partnerships.

Top strategies to act on

- Create a performance and content calendar that feeds marketing, including short-form video.
- Formalize partnerships with regional arts organizations and schools (C2).
- Spotlight alumni and student outcomes in communications (C1).

Indicators

- Program auditions/applications, audience counts, earned media, digital engagement.
- Partnership activity and student experiential credits. What performance and content calendar will best support marketing and recruitment; what short-form video or behind-the-scenes content will we produce
- Which partnerships with regional arts organizations and schools will we formalize; what shared programs will we launch
- How will we spotlight alumni and student outcomes; what channels will we use
- What indicators will we track: auditions and applications, audience counts, earned media, digital engagement, partnership activity, student experiential credits

Library (and Archives)

Relevant goals: B2, B4, A3

Why it matters: The Library anchors mission storytelling, data literacy, and process clarity.

Top strategies to act on

- Support Story Council with archival assets and institutional history (B2).
- Co-lead the process documentation hub with HR and Communications (A3).
- Offer data literacy and research integrity workshops to support B4.

Indicators

Use of process hub resources, attendance at workshops, citations of archives in content.

- How will we support the Story Council with archival assets and mission storytelling
- How will we co-lead the process documentation hub with HR and Communications; what student guides will we publish first
- What data literacy and research integrity workshops will we run; how will we measure attendance and application
- What indicators will we track: use of process hub resources, workshop attendance, citations of archives in content

President's Office

Relevant goals: All, emphasizing G4, B2, B3, B4, B5

Why it matters: Clear governance, cadence, and visible wins sustain momentum.

Top strategies to act on

- Name owners and timelines for A1, B1, B2; publish a 90-day action dashboard.
- Charter master plan process with milestones and budget guardrails (G4).
- Establish reporting cadence to Cabinet, Extended Cabinet, and Board.

Indicators

- Milestone completion, cross-unit dependencies cleared, risks mitigated, on-time reports.
- Who will own A1, B1, and B2 deliverables; what 90-day action dashboard will we publish
- How will we charter the master plan process with milestones and budget guardrails

- What reporting cadence will we set for Cabinet, Extended Cabinet, and Board; what risk log and mitigation approach will we use
- What indicators will we track: milestone completion, dependencies cleared, risks mitigated, on-time reports

Alumni

Relevant goals: C1, A2, G5, B1

Why it matters: Alumni amplify recruiting, mentoring, internships, philanthropy, and public voice.

Top strategies to act on

- Launch alumni referral and mentoring with defined incentives and recognition.
- Align alumni content and events with Story Council themes and service initiatives.

Indicators

Participation rate, referrals and conversion rates, mentor matches, internship outcomes.

- Who are our class and program captains; what referral incentives will we use
- What mentorship matches, internship introductions, and alumni stories will we deliver in the next 90 days
- How will we track referrals to applications and celebrate early conversions
- What indicators will we track: participation rate, referral and conversion rates, mentor matches, internship outcomes

Board of Trustees

Relevant goals: G4 oversight, B5 financial strategy, G1 progress, G3 signature programs, G5 reporting

Why it matters: Board actions set parameters, priorities, and accountability.

Top strategies to act on

- Approve strategic KPIs and reporting cadence.
- Endorse tuition/aid exploration parameters and capital prioritization criteria.
- Review annual service initiative outcomes and signature program benchmarks.

Indicators

KPI variance to plan, risk indicators, campaign progress, compliance with reporting timelines.

- What KPI set and dashboard cadence will we adopt; how will we monitor variance to plan
- What parameters will we approve for tuition and aid exploration and capital prioritization
- How will we review service initiative outcomes and signature program benchmarks; what actions will we take based on results
- What indicators will we monitor: KPI variance to plan, risk indicators, campaign progress, compliance with reporting timelines