

Houston Christian UNIVERSITY



Strategic Plan Annual Report 2023



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Letter from the President



Identifying dreams and goals and determining how to accomplish them are significant activities for all of us. We sometimes do this planning intuitively and informally; however, the more formal processes of envisioning and strategic planning are central aspirations for organizations and useful for even families and individuals. Contrary to what is sometimes thought, these processes are not just business practices. Instead, they reflect the work of God, given that God is clearly represented in Scripture as having plans for his creation and a central strategy through Christ for implementing those merciful and redemptive plans (Ephesians 1:1-10).

Over the last nearly two decades at Houston Christian University, we have gone through envisioning and strategic planning exercises—we titled these *The Ten Pillars*—and have used these processes to give not only

long-range focus to our work but also purpose and direction to our daily tasks.

We started with a mission statement that points to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all our operations for the sake of the learning experiences of our students. We then set ourselves the task of envisioning what the University could look like at the end of a ten-year period if we focused our efforts and sought the Lord's will for the kind of university we should be, all the while setting high standards for ourselves.

In recent years, with the pace of cultural and moral change raging through our world, we have also endeavored to remain committed to our Christian identity.

In that regard, as a Christian university, we strive to be faithful to the moral, spiritual, and academic practices that have historically characterized a university in its search for truth. Those commitments have led us to define as clearly as possible our Christian worldview and the core convictions that animate and drive us. Therefore, we have not only a mission statement but other normative documents, including the University's Preamble (our confession of faith), "Scripture and a Christian Worldview," and "Ten Core Convictions." From these foundational statements, reflective of our beliefs and convictions, we have endeavored to set lofty aspirations that will carry us through the year 2030.

But it's not enough just to aspire: we must seek to implement our dreams and visions. We thus have a strategic plan, a plan that indicates the specific

tasks, priorities, goals, costs, personnel, and timelines relative to each aspiration. These aspirations and the specific plans related to them have been in the making for several years, starting in fact before the pandemic years of 2019–2020.

What we are presenting here is an annual report for 2023—the first in a series of annual reports to be given in the coming years—regarding our Institutional Strategic Plan. It corresponds to the overall vision document (*The Ten Pillars 2030*) that was adopted by the HCU Board of Trustees as a product of the entire University family and represents the progress we have made on an annual basis in implementing our strategic priorities.

None of these aspirations would be possible if not for the sure evidence throughout our history of the Lord's gracious hand upon us. In that regard, we must especially mention the way the Lord has worked through our friends and alumni to bring us to this point in time. And it is exciting to see that, by the end of this academic year, we will have some 26,000 graduates of the University. Many thanks to all those faculty, staff, students, alumni, foundations, and friends who have made it possible for us to reach this significant milestone.

Robert B. Sloan

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert B. Sloan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Growing Size and Place

Imperative One

Because the fulfillment of HCU's mission bears witness to the Lordship of Jesus and serves the good of our city, we will work to grow in size and scope into a truly comprehensive Christian university. Because our world needs more of the kinds of graduates we produce, we will seek to grow the enrollment in our traditional and online academic programs and expand their range significantly into strategic new areas. As we grow, our campus facilities and institutional infrastructure will grow as well to maintain our heritage of excellence.

Student Enrollment



In September 2022, we adopted the name **Houston Christian University** to clarify our mission and identity while widening our reach.



We developed and initiated our **Strategic Enrollment Plan** with a central strategy to pursue significant enrollment growth through targeted expansion in our portfolio of academic programs, including **launching seven new degree programs in 2023-2024** with more being prepared for future years.



We better coordinated efforts to improve **first-year student retention** by improving support programs for academically at-risk students, intervening more effectively when students face academic struggles. We streamlined administrative processes to improve our service to students and to develop a stronger sense of belonging within the HCU campus community.

Total Enrollment

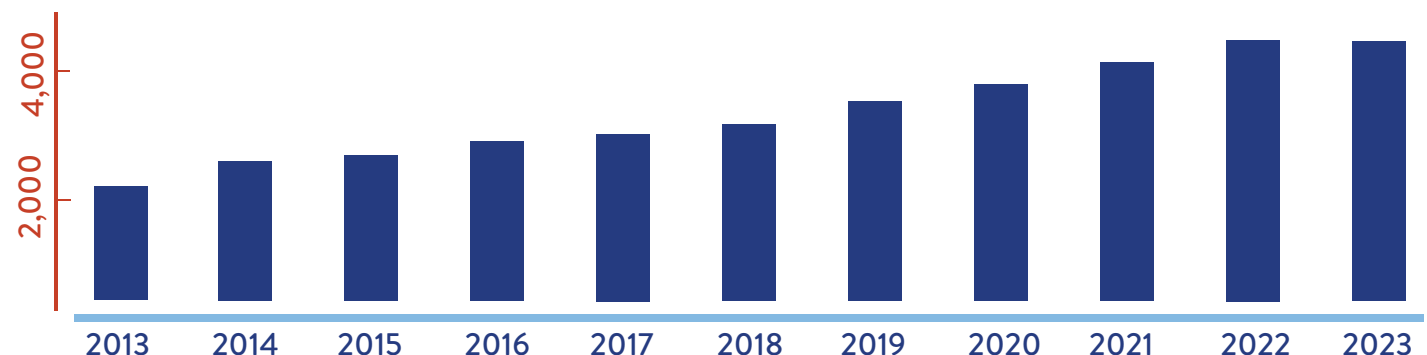
4,258

2022

4,189

2023

Total Enrollment Over the Last 10 Years



Residential
Retention Rates

75.5%

Residential Freshman
Retention Rates

69.3%



Online
Enrollment

1,169

Freshman Students
in Class of '27

686



Residential
Enrollment

3,020

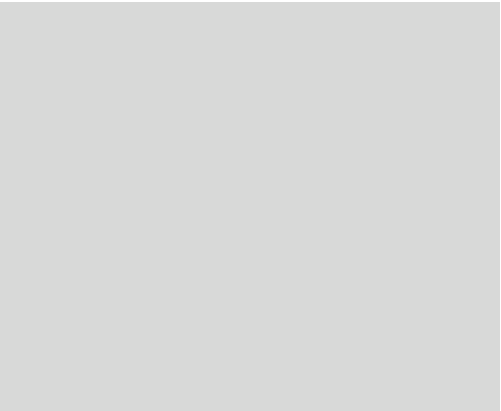


Undergraduate
Enrollment

2,787

Graduate
Enrollment

1,402



Growing Size and Place *(Imperative One cont.)*

New Programs Begin This Academic Year

- BS Cybersecurity
- MS Cybersecurity
- BS Science Studies
- MA Cinematic Arts
- MA Creative Writing
- MA Psychology (online)
- BA -to- MAP (online)



Future Growth

This year we are building the foundation for future growth through preparing curriculum or hiring new faculty for additional academic programs:

- Bachelor of Social Work
- BS Learning Technology and Design (online)
- MS Leadership (online)
- Professional Science Master's Biology (online)



Cinematic Arts



Imperative Two

The classical liberal arts foster curiosity, inspire creativity, develop habits of inquiry, integrate knowledge coherently, promote the formation of virtue, and cultivate intellectual humility and charity. When these disciplines are shaped and infused by the convictions and character of a Christian worldview, they become channels through which we can guide students to more fully know and make known God, his creation in its complexity, humans as his image-bearers, and his plans to redeem and renew the world for his glory. Rather than retreat from the liberal arts, we will demonstrate their enduring relevance and more deeply infuse their wisdom across the curriculum of the University.



Developed a framework for a **new core curriculum** that continues to fully embody our Ten Pillars Core Convictions and that more intentionally integrates the Christian faith throughout student learning and living. With this core curriculum at its foundation, an HCU undergraduate education will be even further distinguished from its peers in providing both reflective engagement with the riches of the Christian tradition as well as the virtues and skills required to contribute to society in the twenty-first century.



Successfully launched the new **Christianity and Culture Conference** out of our College of Arts and Humanities, demonstrating the essential role of the liberal arts in addressing current cultural challenges.



Developed a **new partnership model for The Academy** to expand the reach of HCU's Christian liberal arts core through dual-enrollment at private and classical schools around Houston and beyond.



Begin development of new courses for the redesigned liberal arts core that will guide students to know and make known God, his creation, and humans as his image-bearers.



Through Title V LEAP, **open a new Writing Center** with a full-time director to support student development across the full range of academic, creative, and professional writing.



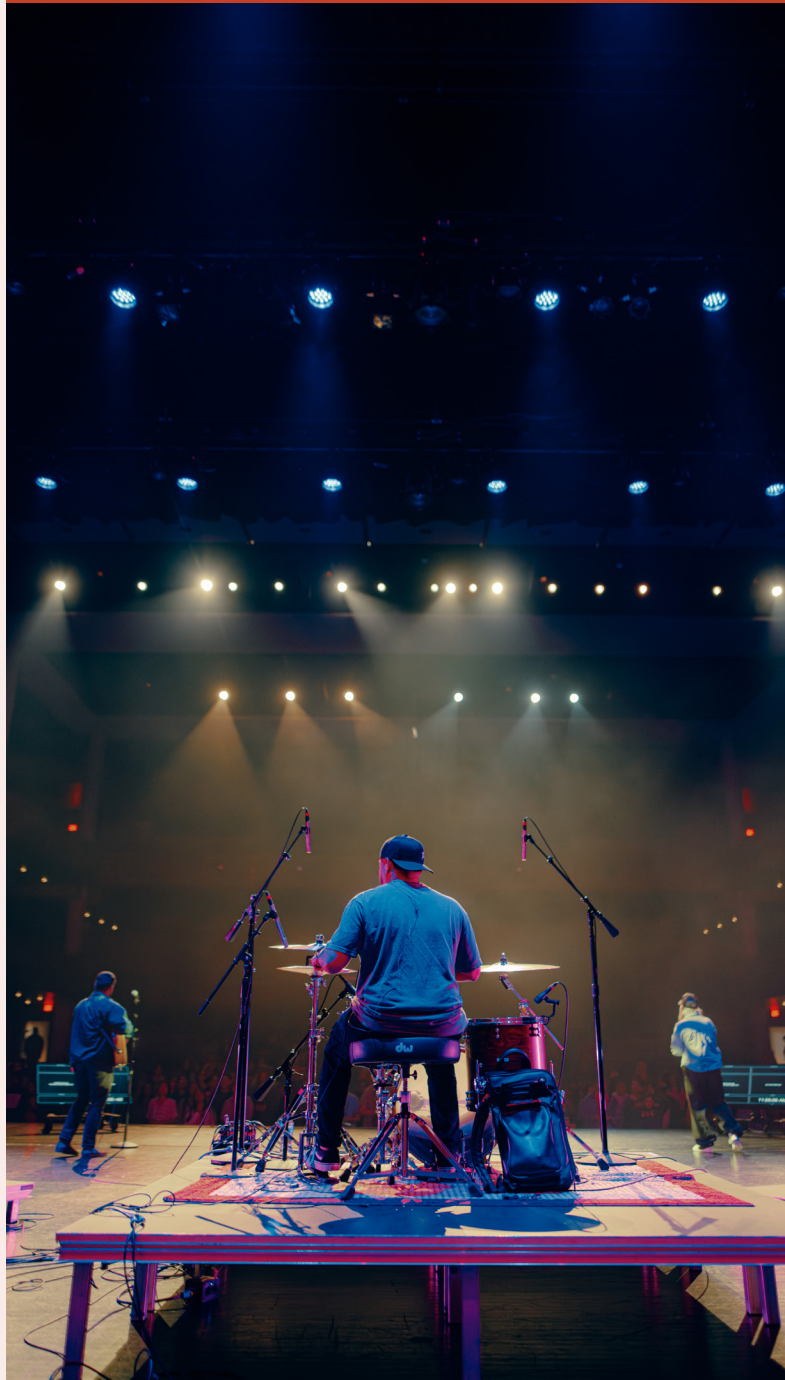
Through Title V LEAP, **hire a Director of New Student Success** to coordinate programs that will stimulate stronger student learning in foundational liberal arts courses.



Add Christian and classical school campuses to our active partnerships in The Academy and grow student enrollment with existing partner schools.

Imperative Three

Discipleship to the Lord Jesus produces a life that is vibrant and flourishing as we become who God created us to be as those who bear his image. We want this vitality to be the lived reality for students as they experience campus life, and we will strengthen the onboarding, professional development, and discipleship we provide to our faculty and staff so that they can faithfully and effectively fulfill their callings at HCU.



Began a new Convocation Planning Team of faculty, staff and student leaders to provide renewed vision for a God-centered Convocation program that is biblically saturated, spiritually formative and missionally engaged that guides students toward 20 key learning objectives around the themes of the gospel, scripture, wisdom, vocation and mission.



One hundred and thirty students confessed faith in Christ for the first time following a Convocation service or during our IGNITE Spiritual Emphasis Week, and 96 students were personally referred to a local church for ongoing growth.



Through *Kaleo*, over 200 students were **involved in one-on-one discipleship relationships** with a fellow student or one of more than fifty faculty and staff members who participate.



Implement a new multi-year vision for intentional spiritual formation through Convocation, focusing in 2023–24 on the theme of ***HOPE - Holiness, Obedience, and the Pursuit of Excellence***.



Refocus the work of our Counseling Center to prioritize ***caring for students' mental health through Christian counseling***, support groups and training workshops.



Invest additional funding to resource HCU student organizations, the Husky Band, and major annual campus events to deepen the connection and community our students experience on campus.



Fifty percent of our full-time faculty will have participated in a semester-long ***Faculty Discipleship Cohort*** that seeks to encourage and equip them in their vocations as Christian teachers, scholars, and disciple-makers.

Imperative Four

We will challenge our students and faculty to engage in the world as we find it, encouraging them to live faithfully as salt and light in the marketplace of work and ideas. HCU Marketplace Initiatives will seek to translate our convictions into the major patterns of work, innovation, and enterprise prevailing today so that our students may discover and develop their talents, gifts, and vocations—and thus serve the purposes of God with work that benefits the world and honors him. We want to prepare future generations of problem solvers through immersive, experiential learning that can develop solutions to grand challenges, particularly in the fields of health and wellness, energy, education, data science, and cybersecurity.



Initiated **new strategic corporate partnerships**, with Cadence Bank, Desroches, and Cesar Guerra at Douglas Elliman Real Estate.



Started the Health and Wellness Marketplace Initiative with the formation of an internal working group and an informal advisory group.



New advisory boards founded for the College of Arts and Humanities and the School of Christian Thought. **HCU college advisory boards** now total 180+ members representing well over 130 different companies, organizations, churches, institutions and governmental offices.



HCU Online Learning will begin to expand the number of certificate and other micro credential programs to better equip employees across many industries with knowledge and skill.



The School of Christian Thought will launch a **Ministry Accelerator** to help catalyze creative, missional engagement within communities.



HCU faculty and staff will engage more directly with the **Greater Houston Partnership, the Katy Christian Chamber of Commerce**, and other community organizations.



Refocus the efforts of HCU Career & Calling to more effectively guide students toward professional readiness and connect them to employment in Houston's growing economic sectors.

Imperative Five

HCU's stability and strength today are not static assets we take for granted. Instead, they are the launchpad from which we will pursue our mission, anchor our growth, and extend our influence. Through careful review of our academic program portfolio's quality and breadth, our brand's reach and reputation, and our comprehensive financial plan's durability, we will ensure that the HCU of ten years from now is even stronger than we are today.



Received \$3,103,371 from state and federal grant programs.



Won a new Title V grant worth \$2.8M over five years to fund new programs and personnel aimed at bolstering success of students at all levels of academic readiness.



Raised significant funds toward the construction of the **Sherry and Jim Smith STEM-Nursing Complex**.



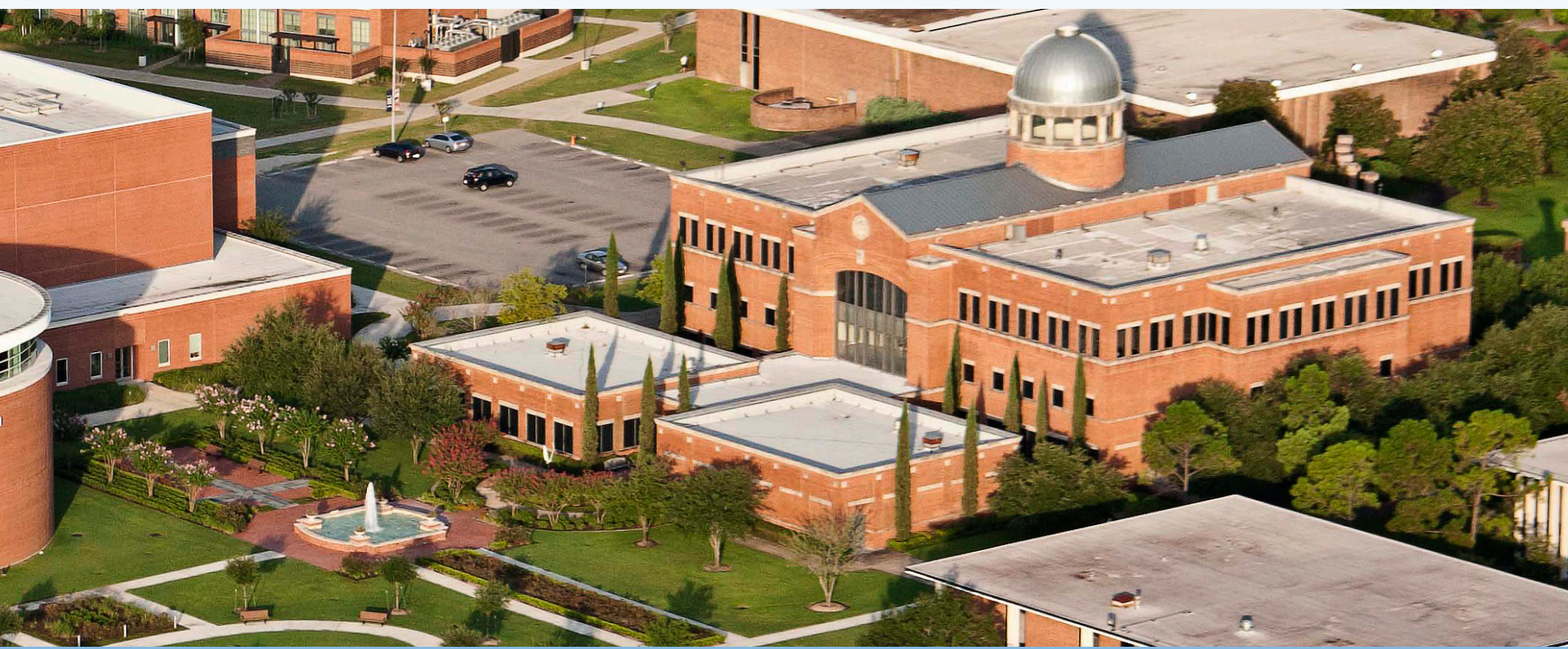
Began marketing efforts to promote and rebrand the University on and off campus.



Over \$5.3 million in gifts and pledges were made to **build HCU's endowment**.



Celebrated the grand opening of the **Morris Family Center for Law and Liberty**, which won the *Houston Business Journal* Landmark Award and which has already hosted major events headlined by former Vice President Mike Pence and leading Houston attorney Mark Lanier.



Applications for new accreditation status with ACBSP for DCOB and with ABET for our engineering and computer science programs.



Begin preparations for SACSCOC Five Year Accreditation Report.



Rollout newly released University logo and wordmark in **new campus signage, billboards, and ads on the radio and TV.**



Begin multi-year renovation of Husky Village Apartments.



Houston
Christian
UNIVERSITY