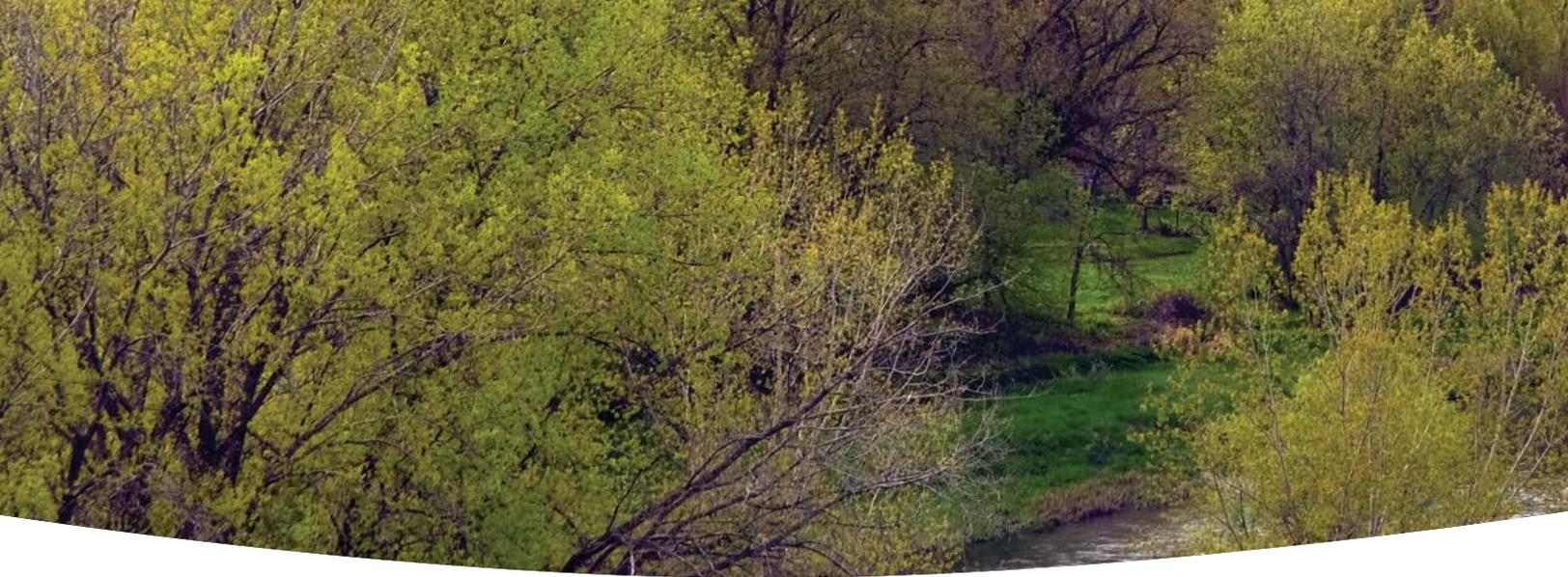


Transformed by the Journey



A Sesquicentennial Strategic Plan

LUTHER
COLLEGE



Luther College Mission Statement

In the reforming spirit of Martin Luther, Luther College affirms the liberating power of faith and learning. As people of all backgrounds, we embrace diversity and challenge one another to learn in community, to discern our callings, and to serve with distinction for the common good.

As a college of the church, Luther is rooted in an understanding of grace and freedom that emboldens us in worship, study, and service to seek truth, examine our faith, and care for all God's people.

As a liberal arts college, Luther is committed to a way of learning that moves us beyond immediate interests and present knowledge into a larger world—an education that disciplines minds and develops whole persons equipped to understand and confront a changing society.

As a residential college, Luther is a place of intersection. Founded where river, woodland, and prairie meet, we practice joyful stewardship of the resources that surround us, and we strive to be a community where students, faculty, and staff are enlivened and transformed by encounters with one another, by the exchange of ideas, and by the life of faith and learning.



The Context for Planning

In 2006 Luther College completed a comprehensive strategic planning process that began in 2000. A remarkable 95 percent of the recommendations in the plan, *Shaping a Distinctive Faith and Learning Community*, were addressed and achieved. Regent George Kuh, whose work in higher education assessment puts him in contact with hundreds of colleges and universities each year, commented on Luther's success: "I can't think of any other institution that could accomplish so much in so little time. The message it sends is that whatever Luther sets its mind to will get done."

In the academic program, new all-college degree requirements and a revised weekly class schedule were adopted. Each academic department completed a formal program review and reconfigured faculty load to allow more time for mentoring and collaborating with students. January Term was restructured; new interdisciplinary programs were added; and more effective student orientation and advising strategies were implemented.

The academic program has also benefited from the establishment of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, enabling regular review of student learning and satisfaction. The new Center for Ethics and Public Life promotes research, writing, and an ongoing conversation about the public choices confronting society and the role ethics ought to play in making those choices. Luther's teaching and learning environment has also been strengthened through significant enhancements to the college's technology infrastructure.

The strategic plan led to a significant facelift on campus. With the addition of the Center for the Arts and an expansion of the Jenson-Noble Hall of Music, including a new recital hall, Luther can now boast of some of the finest facilities in the region dedicated to the arts. Across campus, Loyalty Hall and Dahl Centennial Union were transformed. Several residence halls were renewed, with the most extensive work done in Brandt, Olson, and Ylvisaker. This summer we will complete the Sampson Hoffland Laboratories, 64,000 square feet of teaching and research space for biology and chemistry. The planning process also produced an energy and facilities audit, resulting in a comprehensive plan to address deferred maintenance.

The strategic plan has helped the college deepen and communicate its mission as a college of the church. The Sense of Vocation program assisted students in discerning their own sense of call and led to new programs designed to orient faculty and staff to Luther's mission and heritage. New programs and people bolstered diversity initiatives on campus, and a new structure was devised to integrate marketing and communication strategies.

Undergirding these capital and mission-related achievements were strengthened financial ratios, 100 percent endowment growth, and the completion of the largest campaign in Luther's history, *A Higher Calling: The Campaign for Luther College*.



The strides we have made since 2000 have bolstered Luther's institutional strengths:

- Uncommon clarity of and support for the college's mission by our constituents
- Committed faculty and staff engaged with students in the totality of their lives
- Enduring relationships and feelings of connectedness that alumni have for Luther
- Strong residential character shaped by a unique blend of excellence and egalitarianism
- Faculty-student collaboration, research, and personalized approaches to learning
- The mature inquiry into Biblical literature, religious traditions, and the dialogue between faith and learning
- Music and athletic programs and traditions
- The common first-year Paideia course which explores pivotal questions throughout human history
- The sciences and the college's strong record of medical and graduate school placements
- College Ministries programs that foster spiritual formation and relationships of mutual service
- Sustained commitment to support economic diversity among Luther students
- Balanced budgets and excellent stewardship of the physical plant

We are now well-positioned to launch a new vision that will guide decision-making beyond the college's sesquicentennial in 2011. This new plan, *Transformed*

by the Journey, is designed to carry forward the current momentum and build on three distinctive Luther qualities: our uncommon location and how it shapes a strong sense of community, the way faith and learning intersect and lead to a transforming education, and how we engage students with the larger world.

These three qualities provide the foundation for the plan's three sections. The first, "Connecting Faith, Learning, and the Larger World," includes recommendations designed to better support teaching and learning, make distinctive programs like Paideia even stronger, and increase student participation in study-away and internship experiences. It addresses the need to find new ways to assess student learning and link student learning outcomes with faculty and staff development. Recommendations in this section also address the ongoing need to strengthen and celebrate the college's religious heritage and the ways that connecting faith and learning can lead to both personal and societal transformation.

The second section, "Connecting People, Place, and the Luther Experience," sets forth critical strategies regarding enrollment, retention, and marketing. This includes taking a hard look at diversity goals as we strive to remain affordable and accessible to students from all backgrounds. Recommendations in this section also focus on ways to invest in programs that will strengthen the college's strong sense of community. And because the Luther community extends beyond campus, we need to find new ways to engage alumni, parents and friends through the use of technology and new programs.



The final part of the plan, “Connecting Sustainability, Stewardship, and Global Citizenship,” looks at ways Luther might prepare its graduates with the skills and knowledge to lead society in a more sustainable direction. Luther was among the first colleges in the country to sign the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, an effort to address climate change by encouraging institutions to reduce their carbon footprints and make sustainability part of every student’s learning experience. The strategic plan focuses on ways to achieve the goals set out in this commitment so that Luther is a model, not a mirror, of society. This effort is not only the right thing to do, it will also help ensure Luther’s financial security. Recommendations in this section also tackle some of the final capital projects needing attention on campus: the renewal of Valders Hall of Science and Miller and Dieseth residence halls, the expansion of Baker Village, and the creation of an aquatic center on Luther property in collaboration with the Decorah community.

The title of this strategic plan is also the theme that has been selected for Luther’s sesquicentennial celebration. *Transformed by the Journey* speaks to the experiences of early Norwegian settlers who established the college but also to the ways Luther has changed over time. Most important, the theme points to what has remained constant since the college’s founding—“We strive to be a community where students, faculty, and staff are enlivened and transformed by encounters with one another, by the exchange of ideas, and by the life of faith and learning.”

The recommendations in this plan—many of which are operational in tone and content—seek to accomplish the overall goal of transforming students’ lives. Because this task lies primarily in the hands of Luther College’s faculty and staff, the first recommendation affirms the importance of investing in them and their work. I thank each of them for their unwavering commitment to this college and to our students, and to the many alumni, parents, and friends who support them in this most important calling. Together may we realize the vision set forth in this plan so that Luther College’s journey to and beyond the sesquicentennial continues to provide students with a transformative learning experience.

Thank you for joining us in this journey.

Richard L. Torgerson, Ph.D.
President

Summer 2008



I

Strategic Imperative I: Connecting Faith, Learning, and the Larger World

At the heart of a Luther education is the way faith and learning intersect and in turn connect students to the larger world. As we look to the future, we envision Luther as a college where students continue to be transformed—by the demanding journey of liberal learning, by the call to think about learning in relation to faith and service, and by the beauty of the place, physical and communal.

Central to this transformation is the wholeness of a Luther education. While we recognize the importance of specialized learning and the strong reputation of numerous major programs at the college, it is the call for students to integrate their learning that is Luther's central gift and strength. We expect students to connect the major with studies across the liberal arts as well as with learning that occurs beyond the classroom, to examine the ethical questions their learning raises, and to act upon that inquiry for the good of nation, church, and world.

To do this well we must continue to invest in faculty and staff so that they will thrive as committed agents of Luther's mission. This should include the deepening of knowledge in their fields of expertise, the exchange of knowledge across departments, the enrichment that diversity in hiring brings, and a functional fluency in information technology. We must build on Luther's traditions of integrating learning within the academic curriculum, across the range of student residential experiences, and with the larger world beyond the campus. This should involve both long-standing and new programs, both regular classroom exchange and experiential learning, both study on campus and study away. And we must strengthen our commitment to mission by reflecting on whether students, faculty, and staff are meeting their goals and by sustaining the habit of thinking about faith and its relation to our individual and common vocation.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Investing in Faculty and Staff

- Create and endow a Fund for Transformational Teaching and Learning that will allow the college to set high expectations for performance and provide the encouragement and resources necessary for faculty and staff to thrive as committed agents of Luther's mission.
- Strengthen Luther's institutional commitment to hiring and retaining a diverse faculty and staff.
- Strengthen information literacy and fluency initiatives for faculty and staff so that they can better prepare Luther students to enter the workforce with strong skills in information research, critical analysis, and technology.

Integrating Learning

- Envision ways in which the college's long-standing Paideia program can build strong intellectual community across the student body, the faculty, and, where feasible, Luther alumni and parents.
- Strengthen other distinctive programs including J-term, the honors program, the collegewide senior project, and independent collaborative research, and publicize them as elements of a transformative student experience built on close and personal collaboration with faculty and staff.
- Position learning in the context of the larger world by ensuring that all students have an opportunity for a study-away experience (study abroad, service learning, research, student teaching, internship, or longer term study off campus).
- Increase opportunities for student internships with the goal of ultimately achieving 70 percent participation in internships by students from all levels—first-years to seniors.
- Foster integrative learning that connects academic inquiry with ethical reflection and spiritual formation demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.

Strengthening Mission

- Engage Luther students, faculty, and staff in regular review of the college's progress toward its goals for student learning and document for others the ways that Luther prepares students to lead good lives.
- Affirm Luther's faith and learning mission by building and strengthening relationships of mutual service with selected congregations and faith communities.

II

Strategic Imperative II: Connecting People, Place, and the Luther Experience

Those familiar with Luther know that the interrelationship among the college's strong academic program, faith tradition, sense of community, and picturesque location creates a unique and powerful learning experience. As we look to the future, we must continue to ensure that qualified and promising students who desire a Luther education have the opportunity.

Affordability will continue to be a key factor in enrolling and retaining students. Pressure grows each year from families and the government to restrain cost increases and operate more efficiently, especially because fewer families have saved adequately for college and federal support for higher education is flat. This makes student financial aid critical, and because it takes an increasing share of Luther's operating budget (31 percent in 2007–08), new strategies are required in awarding aid.

We also recognize that attaining a college degree continues to be out of reach for growing numbers of minority and low-income students. As the Midwest and the nation's population continue to grow more diverse, how can Luther best respond to the dual challenge of access and success for students from diverse communities? Not only is this commitment a faithful expression of Luther's mission, it also strengthens our ability to prepare Luther students for lives of service in the global community.

Telling the Luther story in new markets and in new ways is also needed, and calling upon those who know us to help with this work will be important. One of the college's distinctive strengths is the extended Luther community, a committed and engaged constituency. We must build on efforts to cultivate a sense of belonging with alumni, parents, and friends by providing opportunities for involvement, supporting those who promote the college in their home communities, and making current information about Luther accessible and transferable. Technology becomes an important partner in this work as a powerful tool to connect people with place.



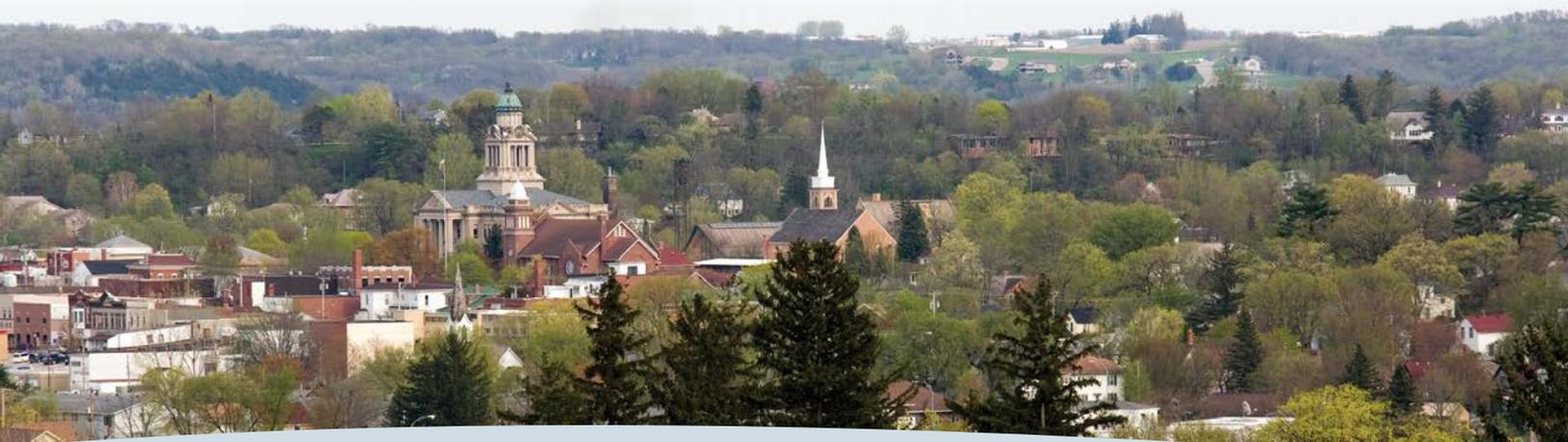
RECOMMENDATIONS

Enrolling and Retaining Students

- Build the applicant pool to ensure an annual first-year entering class of 670–680 while sustaining a yield of approximately 40 percent, and continue to enroll at least 50 transfer students each year.
- Increase first- to second-year persistence to 88 percent by 2012.
- Create a business model to test the viability of level enrollment after 2012, taking into account demographic and economic projections.

Engaging Constituents

- Develop new, fresh, and persuasive methods to communicate Luther's distinctiveness and how students fulfill the college mission in ways that resonate with various target markets.
- Increase the number of parents and alumni who participate in college activities, provide financial support, and assist in identifying and recruiting students.
- Expand and better utilize information technology services and resources to serve both the local and extended Luther community, and enhance data stewardship and network security.
- Invest in programs that intentionally impact the sense of community at Luther.



III

Strategic Imperative III: Connecting Sustainability, Stewardship, and Global Citizenship

Since its founding in 1861, Luther College has remained true to its roots while preparing graduates to respond to a changing world. As we look ahead to the next century and beyond, global environmental problems, resource scarcity, and climate change will threaten the health of the planet. They will also present economic and operational challenges for Luther. Our commitment to relevant and transformative experiences for students pushes us to seek sustainability through greater efficiencies and new policies in operations while preparing graduates with the skills, knowledge, and experience to lead society in a more sustainable direction.

As a college of the church, striving for sustainability is anchored in our call to be good stewards of God's creation and responsible citizens in the global community. As a strategic imperative, sustainability pushes us to reduce energy usage and consumption patterns and to explore renewable energy production strategies. By building upon Luther's decision to be a charter signatory of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment and the significant progress that has already been made, we must be bold in our efforts and become a leader within the educational community.

To do this, sustainability must weave itself into all areas of college life, including the curriculum and outreach programs that create awareness on campus and in the region. It must also guide decision-making in operations through the adoption of sustainable practices and the continued care for this special place—the land and physical plant that have been cherished by generations of Luther students, faculty, and staff for nearly 150 years.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating Awareness

- Create a Center for Sustainable Communities to be a catalyst for change locally and regionally.
- Make environmental sustainability a part of every student's learning experience.
- Nurture connection to place in all stakeholders.

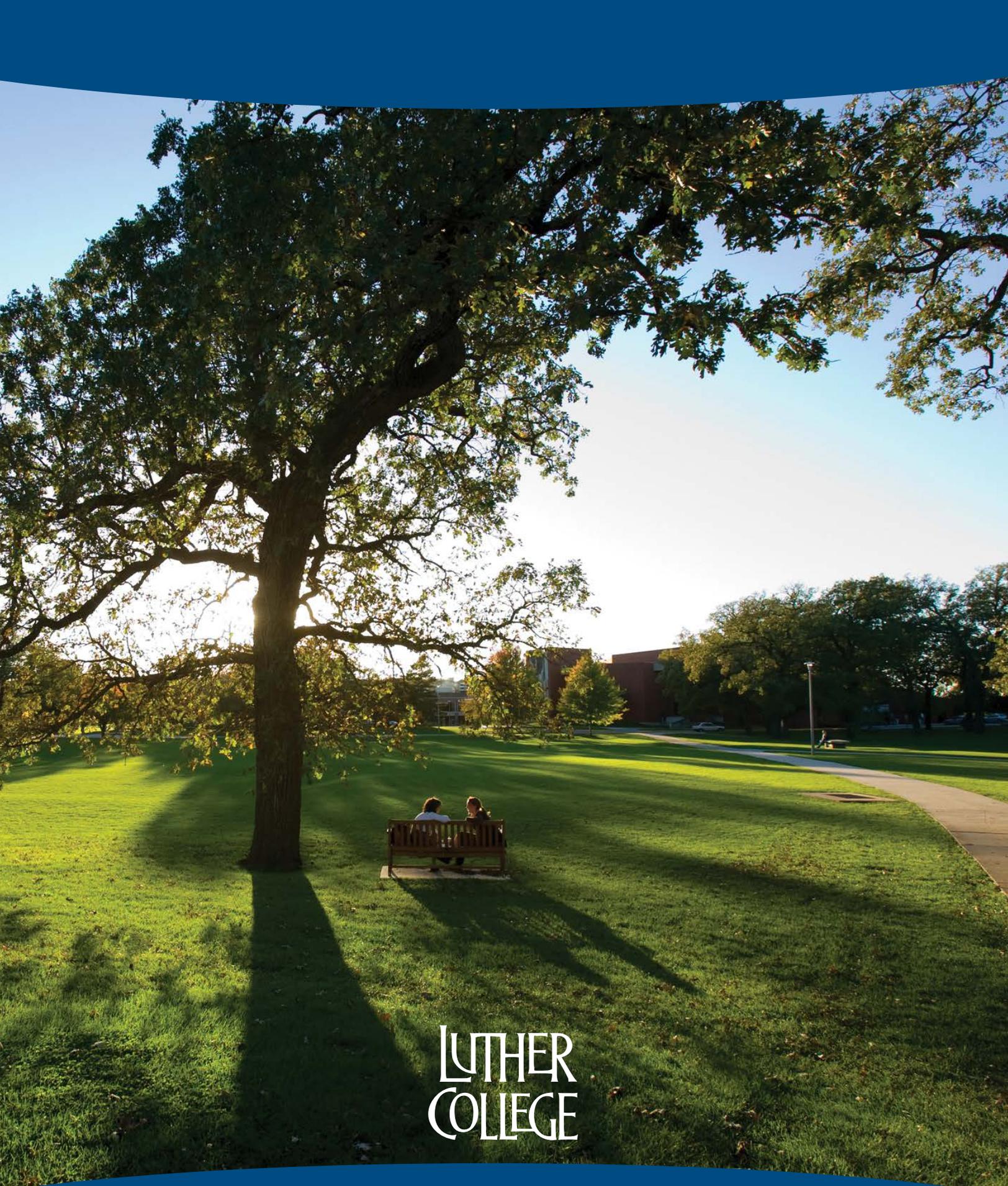
Adopting Sustainable Practices

- Model stewardship and sustainability in all college operations to reduce Luther's environmental impact and mitigate operational costs.
- Reduce Luther's carbon footprint by 50 percent and develop a plan to achieve carbon neutrality.

Caring for Place

- Design and implement a campus land use plan that affirms land stewardship, sustainability, and landscape designer Jens Jensen's original 1911 vision for the Luther campus.
- Continue sustainable and strategic enhancements of the plant and facilities, with a focus on student learning, energy payback, campus needs, and economic return.





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