



Phase II of Reimagining the Legacy

Learn • Liberate • Lead

STRATEGIC PLAN

Lincoln University of Pennsylvania

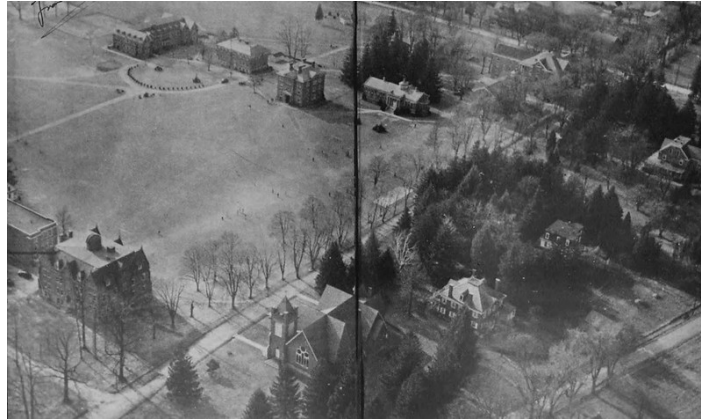
The Nation's First Degree-Granting Historically Black College and University

Table of Contents

History	3
The Planning Process	4
Higher Education Landscape	4
The Data	5
Review of the Strategic Themes	6
Listening Sessions	6
Emerging Strategic Opportunities	7
Finances and Enrollment	7
Curricular and Co-Curricular	8
Technology, Physical Environment, and Internal Processes	9
Strategic Plan: Phase II of Reimagining the Legacy	9
Vision	10
Mission	10
Values	10
Strategic Priorities	11
1. Enhance Academic Quality	11
2. Enhance Student Experience	11
3. Increase Financial Resources	12
4. Improve Infrastructure	13

History

Since its founding in 1854, Lincoln University, the nation's first degree-granting Historically Black College and University (HBCU), has been internationally recognized for its commitment to excellence in scholarship and service. Lincoln University graduates have distinguished themselves in many fields including medicine, science, technology, education, law, and the arts.



A historic aerial view of the Lincoln University campus.

In addition to our more visible graduates — Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall '30, poet and playwright Langston Hughes '29, the first president of Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikiwe '30, and the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah '39 — Lincoln University and its graduates have achieved the following distinctions: participated in the founding of eight universities in the United States and model for the U.S. Peace Corps, and published the first alumni magazine of any college or university (1884). Lincoln graduates also include the first African American Bishop of the United Methodist Church, Roy C. Nichols '41, the first African American female rear admiral in the U.S. Navy, Lillian Fishburne '71, and the first African American female mayor of Philadelphia, Cherelle Parker '94.

The University's beginnings can be traced back with recognition to its founder, Presbyterian Minister John Miller Dickey; his wife, Sarah Emlen Cresson; and the first two students, James Ralston Amos and his brother, Thomas H. Amos. Lincoln University was initially chartered as Ashmun Institute in honor of Jehudi Ashmun, the first governor of Liberia, and renamed Lincoln University in 1866 after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Since its inception, Lincoln has attracted an interracial and international enrollment from the surrounding community and region, and around the world. The University admitted women students in 1952, and formally associated with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1972 as a state-related, co-educational university. Lincoln University is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Lincoln University has had 14 presidents in its distinguished history. They include Dickey (1854–56); John Pym Carter (1856–61); John Wynne Martin (1861–65); Isaac Norton Rendall (1865–1906); John Ballard Rendall (1906–24); William Hallock Johnson (1926–36); Walter Livingston Wright (1936–45); Horace Mann Bond, '23 (1945–57); Marvin Wachman (1961–69); Herman Russell Branson (1970–85); Niara Sudarkasa (1987–98); Ivory V. Nelson (1999–2011); Robert R. Jennings (2012–14); and Brenda A. Allen, '81 (2017–present).

Lincoln University's historic campus is located on 422 acres in Southern Chester County, Pennsylvania. Lincoln also operates an additional location at 3020 Market Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Lincoln University remains committed to preserving its distinction as an intellectual and cultural resource for this region and beyond.

The Planning Process

The planning process began with a review of the 2018 plan. Assessments regarding the higher education landscape today in comparison to 2018; the impact of the plan on major indicators; and the continued relevance of the plan's strategic themes were made. The results of these assessments were shared in two separate Listening Sessions. The first was conducted at the Lincoln University Board of Trustees Retreat on September 14, 2023. The second Listening Session was held on March 14, 2024 for the Extended Cabinet (Directors and above) and faculty representatives. A live-streamed session was also held that day so that students, alumni, staff and others could provide input. Below are summaries of the results of these assessments.



Generations of Lincoln graduates — a legacy of upward mobility and global leadership.

Higher Education Landscape

The review process revealed that although much of the higher education landscape has changed over the past six years, the factors identified in 2018 remain crucial to the success of Lincoln University. These factors included threats to small colleges; importance of a focus on essential skills; and the positive impact of experiential learning on post-graduation success.

Small colleges remain especially vulnerable in the current higher education climate. The effects of the enrollment cliff fueled by the population decline has been fully realized over the past six years. The U.S. population peaked in 2018 and the decline in the number of college-aged students followed soon after. The decline is most marked for African American and White students between the ages of 18 and 24 and expected to persist through 2035. Moreover, the cliff was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Data in 2021 showed that about one-third of college-aged students expressed a reluctance to attend college.

While the human effects of the pandemic appear to be waning, the data is still out on whether students have reconsidered a college education.

For Lincoln University, the additional characteristics of being semi-private, liberal arts and historically Black provide further stressors. Enrollment is the primary source of revenue in support of the operating budget. Enrollment declines necessitate the University increase efforts to identify and sustain new sources of revenue. Of particular interest is the idea of an expansion model focused on additional professional or graduate programs to enhance enrollment as well as the creation of new revenue streams obtained through leasing some of the institution's landholdings. Some of these ideas were implemented between 2018 and the present and will continue to be a focus going forward.

The importance of Essential Skills in this 21st century economy remains relevant. Rapid advances in science and technology fuel many of the shifts and changes in industry. As a result of these factors, the world is experiencing unprecedented levels of global competition and market disruptions. Higher education experts suggest that universities redouble effort to develop and hone students' intellectual and interpersonal skills towards producing graduates able to tool and retool as warranted. The plan placed great emphasis on embedding the development of essential skills into the curricular and co-curricular opportunities at Lincoln. Continued assurance that the liberal arts approach used at Lincoln University places great emphasis on the intellectual development of students must remain central to our strategic goals.

Experiential Learning entails pedagogies such as First-Year Seminars, Learning Communities, Writing-Intensive Courses, Collaborative Assignments and Projects, Undergraduate Research, Diversity/Global Learning, Service Learning, Community-Based Learning, Internships, and Capstone Courses and Projects. These learning modalities have been found to positively relate to persistence and grade point averages, higher rates of student-faculty interaction, increases in critical thinking and writing skills, greater appreciation for diversity, and higher student engagement. Expanding experiential learning opportunities remain relevant as we move forward.

The Data

Qualitative and quantitative analyses revealed that the institution made strategic progress over the past six years. Analyses revealed an increase in full-time faculty, a revised general education curriculum and increased grant support for faculty research and teaching, all priorities of the plan. In addition, data revealed a consistent year-over-year increase in the number of students participating in experiential learning opportunities and major increases in staff to support advising and student problem solving. Federal and State dollars connected to the various COVID-19 relief efforts were used to establish zero balances for students enrolled in the Fall of 2022 and fundraising has had a steady increase of at least 3% year over year since 2019. Finally, the campus is enjoying major technology upgrades and the University has made significant progress towards implementing the master plan including the restoration of four historical buildings, the reconstruction of Dickey Hall, upgrade of outdoor track and football turf and an upgrade of the outdoor basketball courts.

Analyses comparing retention and graduation rates for the six-year average prior to 2017–2018 (the first year of implementation of some of the priorities) and the six-year average since then shows modest progress. However, progress in both retention and graduation rates falls short of national averages and the University's aspirational goal.

Review of the Strategic Themes

The 2018 plan proposed five interrelated themes. These included:

1. **Theme One:** Build a culture that supports student success — Student success at Lincoln University is defined as supporting students to: perform well academically; develop holistically (mind, body and spirit); and successfully advance to graduate school or employment.
2. **Theme Two:** Enhance Academic Quality and Achieve Operational Excellence — By focusing on a liberal arts approach featuring high impact practices, investing in areas of strength in the sciences, and investing in faculty growth and development, Lincoln University graduates students who continuously build our reputation. Moreover, Lincoln's business processes are characterized by operational excellence.
3. **Theme Three:** Develop Strategic Partnerships to Leverage Resources and Assets — Through a myriad of strategic partnerships, Lincoln works with local, regional, national and international partners to develop property, conduct research, solve community problems, and contribute to the cultural life of the community.
4. **Theme Four:** Strategically Align Resources to Support Institutional Priorities — Lincoln University aligns resources with its highest priorities. Strategic spending ensures that every dollar spent supports student success. New and reallocated resources support initiatives that enhance the educational experiences of all students. Lincoln constantly identifies business opportunities that generate new dollars for investment.
5. **Theme Five:** Tell the Lincoln University Story — Lincoln University's reputation is realized through the quality of its graduates which is linked to its history and legacy as an HBCU with a liberal arts, social responsibility and global engagement perspective.

Continuous review over the past six years has shown that while the five themes remain relevant, their interrelatedness is better understood through four priorities. The four priorities provide clearer focus for generating and assessing strategic activities. The areas of focus are:

Enhance Academic Quality — Themes 1, 2, 3, 4

Enhance Student Experience — Themes 1, 3, 4

Increase Financial Resources — Themes 3, 4, 5

Improve Infrastructure — Themes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Listening Sessions

Members of the UNCF Institute for Capacity Building, Dr. Zillah Fluker and Ms. Aja Johnson, facilitated Listening Sessions with the Board of Trustees, the Executive Administration, Faculty, staff and student representatives. The sessions consisted of three activities designed to elicit feedback on key strengths (Secret Sauce); areas for improvement (Start, Stop, Continue); and future aspirations (North Star). The sessions used data and insights obtained from the review of the plan as context for the exercises.

Across all sessions, the Lincoln legacy for fostering upward mobility and producing global leaders was voiced as the institution's greatest strength. Also among the comments about strengths were passionate faculty and staff, quality education, vast co-curricular resources (internships and research opportunities) and a strong family tradition. Regarding improvements, many expressed the need for staff and faculty to stop complaining and over-analyzing.

There was also concern expressed regarding fits of starts and stops and the desire to stop equating the “Lincoln Way” with low expectations. Band-aiding problems and “making do” were also mentioned as things the institution needed to stop supporting.

The ideas offered for continuation were consistent with activities begun in the 2018 plan. These included continuing to scale up experiential learning opportunities, the focus on overall student health and well-being, cross-unit collaboration, breaking down silos, curricular enhancement, investments in faculty, staff and physical plant and expanding partnerships. Similarly, ideas for things that the University should start advanced ideas within the strategic plan. Some of the ideas proposed were focused on workforce development portfolio and other adult learner opportunities, increase focus on recruiting top-tier faculty; better leveraging of the university legacy; investment in leadership development of staff for succession planning; and launching economic development plans for the area.

The North Star aspirations expressed during the Listening Sessions boast visions of an institution at the top. Some expressed a university with world-renowned faculty to help garner global recognition. Some spoke of a university with unlimited resources to invest in the growth and development of students. Others want to see Lincoln as a number one liberal arts institution with state-of-the-art facilities and ubiquitous technology. These are quite lofty aspirations but there were expressions of desire to attempt to reach such goals.

Emerging Strategic Opportunities

Finances and Enrollment

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Lincoln managed its resources towards ensuring educational continuity, keeping the faculty and staff employed, and protecting the health and safety of the entire campus. Although enrollments were down and the University had to adjust the revenue model to account for remote learning, the institution functioned at a high level throughout the pandemic. Lincoln operated fully through the pandemic without furloughing staff or diminishing curricular or co-curricular offerings. Lincoln’s ability to persist through the pandemic was supported by State and Federal grants as well as the institution’s own cash reserves. Post-pandemic, Lincoln University has the opportunity to rebuild its liquidity to ensure its financial stability into the future.

Lincoln University has experienced a decline in enrollment since 2020. The decline is the result of converging factors. Primary is the effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on attitudes about attending college such that in 2021, nearly one-third of college-aged students expressed reluctance to pursue post-secondary education. Additionally, these attitudes are expressed by an already shrinking pool of students due to a decline in the overall population. As a result, colleges and universities nationwide are facing a slowing or decline in enrollment growth. More than two-thirds of Lincoln University’s operating budget is driven by enrollment. This reality necessitates that the University develop a strategy to better balance enrollment and budget. Opportunity exists to think about right-sizing the University’s various student populations including redefining recruitment goals for traditional-aged first-year undergraduates and transfer students.

At the same time, adult learners, those over 24 years of age, are the fastest growing post-secondary population in the country. Some are looking for opportunities to complete baccalaureate degrees or pursue graduate study. Others are seeking options to obtain micro-credentials like certifications or industry-specific training. Lincoln University’s School for Adult and Continuing Education has offered a limited number of these pathways for

decades. The need for a better-trained, technologically skilled workforce, as well as the desire to diversify industries at the management level offer both enrollment and financial opportunities for the University.

Lincoln University attracts gifted and academically prepared students. Many hail from extremely under-resourced families. Supporting these students' ability to matriculate, uninterrupted, will require that the University have the resources to close the financial gap between the total cost of attendance and what the student can bring to the table. Embracing the opportunity to grow a significant scholarship endowment focused on lessening the financial burden of families and enhancing students' ability to finish their education is a top priority.

The University's asset base of land and facilities is relatively large compared to institutions of the same size and character. Lincoln has not maximized these assets towards resources for the University. Seizing the occasion to gain resources, funds and educational opportunities through use of the institution's physical assets remains an avenue to improve the institution's cash position, create scholarships and invest in other strategic priorities.

Curricular and Co-Curricular



Faculty and students engage in study abroad — a hallmark of the Lincoln experience.

The Listening Sessions reconfirmed that Lincoln University should continue with its tradition of the liberal arts. Faculty, students and alumni have been especially supportive of this direction. Progress achieved during the current plan, including curriculum revisions, teaching load reductions, increased participation in experiential learning and increased academic support have helped to re-center the liberal arts at Lincoln. Opportunity exists to deepen the liberal arts culture at the University by focusing on resources to continue enhancement of teaching and scholarship as well as better integrating essential skills development into curricular and co-curricular activities.

Great opportunities continue to exist to better integrate experiential learning into the educational context. Much of this entails positioning the importance of these activities in the orientation, advising, and requirements of students. Moreover, there is a continuing need to clarify the relationship between experiential learning opportunities and post-graduation success as well as the various pathways available for exploration and experience.

Technology, Physical Environment, and Internal Processes

The past six years have witnessed major improvements in technology and the physical plant. The restoration of historic buildings has greatly reduced the deferred maintenance log while also creating new spaces for learning and administration. Technology upgrades have transformed the living-learning environment, but much work is left to be done. Finally, increases in faculty and staff have buttressed the academic and support structures. Achieving the right balance of faculty and staff to support the students served must remain a priority.

Continuing investments in technological and physical infrastructures will ensure that Lincoln University keeps pace with the demands of a 21st century learning environment. Improving the physical environment while reducing the University's carbon footprint is also important. Moreover, opportunity abounds for capitalizing on new technologies towards streamlining internal processes and maximizing the University's market position. Increases in faculty and staff continue as a priority as we seek the functional synergies required in our organizational structure towards achieving the highest quality of service to our students.

Strategic Plan: Phase II of Reimagining the Legacy

Learn — Liberate — Lead

From its beginnings, Lincoln University has placed great emphasis on a liberal arts education dedicated to students acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for success. But learning at Lincoln has not just been about mastering facts and figures. Rather a Lincoln education places stress on knowledge acquisition towards creating free, independent and creative thinkers. Further, the educational goals have always favored the use of knowledge and intellectual skills towards leading change in the nation and beyond. This legacy represents the strength upon which the University can continue to build, especially since the educational process at Lincoln speaks well to contemporary calls for college graduates able to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Moreover, the Lincoln University educational experience is distinguished by the deliberate marrying of the curricular with the co-curricular experience. The goal is to ensure multiple opportunities for students to develop and hone the essential skills necessary for success beyond college. Additionally, the educational environment of the institution nurtures the values of respect, responsibility and results as the core characteristics expected from all of its members. Together these goals and expectations yield graduates of distinction who go on into the world to be and become anything that they please.

“Phase II of Reimagining the Legacy: Learn-Liberate-Lead” is designed to continue advancing this glorious history. Particular attention will continue to focus on innovations in teaching and the need to be more deliberate in efforts to develop and hone important intellectual and interpersonal skills. Towards these ends, Phase II has two broad aims: (1) to perfect the distinctive model of education at Lincoln University and (2) to strengthen the processes and resources needed to realize the educational goals.



Commencement at Lincoln — the realization of the promise of Learn, Liberate, Lead.

Vision

Lincoln University will be a national model for 21st century liberal arts undergraduate education and innovative graduate and professional programs.

Mission

Lincoln University, the nation's first degree-granting Historically Black College and University (HBCU), educates and empowers students to lead their communities and change the world. It does so by:

- Providing a rigorous liberal arts education featuring active and collaborative learning;
- Integrating academic and co-curricular programs with the University's distinctive legacy of global engagement, social responsibility and leadership development; and
- Cultivating the character, values and standards of excellence needed to enable students to become responsible citizens of a global community.

Values

- **Respect** — To consider every member of the community worthy of high regard.
- **Responsibility** — To be willing to answer for one's conduct and fulfill obligations, and to choose for oneself between right and wrong.
- **Results** — To work diligently to achieve desired outcomes.

Strategic Priorities

1. Enhance Academic Quality

Themes 1, 2, 3, 4

In order to expand upon our legacy of providing students with a world-class liberal arts education, Lincoln University must fortify its standing as a leader in academic excellence, while existing at the cutting edge of high-impact pedagogies. To that end, we must attract, train and retain high-caliber faculty and staff, who can create impactful learning environments and raise the University's visibility in academic settings. Additionally, there is a need to expand completion and graduate programs as well as continuing education opportunities as Lincoln seeks to be an innovator for adult education.



Hands-on science at Lincoln — investing in areas of strength.

Objective 1: To enhance academic quality by implementing curriculum enhancements, forging external partnerships, collaborating with internal co-curricular units, and promoting the teaching-scholar model.

Objective 2: To expand and enhance pathways for adult learners to attain Baccalaureate Degrees, Graduate Studies, and Micro-Credentials while aligning with workforce needs and contributing to building a more inclusive regional economy.

2. Enhance Student Experience

Themes 1, 3, 4

As a liberal arts institution, Lincoln University's approach to educating relies heavily on robust academic support and ample experiential learning opportunities. As a complement to lessons taught in the classroom, advising, tutoring and co-curricular activities, such as internships, study abroad programs and research opportunities allow students to progress seamlessly through their programs and to merge theory with practice by applying their learning in a real-world setting.



Students translate theory into practice through undergraduate research and presentation.

Objective 1: To update the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan taking into consideration the changing landscape, issues of size, selectivity and opportunities to improve retention, graduation and post-graduation outcomes.

Objective 2: To create and implement a structured and evidence-based approach to student success.

3. Increase Financial Resources

Themes 3, 4, 5

As higher education becomes increasingly unaffordable and inaccessible, Lincoln University has doubled down on its tradition to support all students in their pursuit of education. No matter where they come from, nor their socioeconomic status, we believe that students from all backgrounds can achieve at high levels. Resources are needed to fulfill this promise as well as ensure the legacy of the University.



An engaged alumni community — a wellspring of support for the next generation of Lions.

Objective 1: To create a financial plan to support strategic priorities.

Objective 2: To plan and implement a fundraising campaign to support student scholarships.

Objective 3: To leverage the Lincoln University legacy and alumni community towards channeling new resources to the institution.

4. Improve Infrastructure

Themes 1, 2, 3, 4

In reimagining a bold, new future at Lincoln University, it is imperative that infrastructure, campus-wide, is capable of supporting our long-term academic and operational growth. This infrastructure includes operational processes, staff development, physical plant, and digital technology.



Upgraded living-learning spaces support a 21st century educational environment.

Objective 1: To continue enhancing the living-learning environment through restoration, decreasing deferred maintenance, reducing the University's carbon footprint and creating standards and guidelines for future investments.

Objective 2: To enhance risk management through education, training, process improvement and policy clarifications.

Objective 3: To build a community to support student success through staff development, incentives, community engagement and investment in career pathways for staff.

Objective 4: To pursue a ubiquitous technology infrastructure through hardware and software investments and upgrades for administration and teaching/learning.



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