Friends and Colleagues,

WELCOME to the new strategic plan for Ashland University, Ashland Rising 2020. Inside these pages is a vision for our future and a glimpse of what we will become. In this plan, we have identified five strategic imperatives for Ashland University built around “Pillars of Distinction”:

- Academic Excellence
- Our Unique Christian Identity
- Exemplary Fiscal Stewardship
- A Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Campus Environment
- Enhanced Community Engagement

As a result of the comprehensive collaboration involved, our strategic plan is not just strategy and tactics, but the collective heart, values, and traditions that form the foundation of our university.

This strategic plan’s title, Ashland Rising 2020, reflects our faith in Ashland’s future. Ashland is rising to meet the educational and personal goals of each student. Ashland is rising to the challenges that face higher education. Ashland is rising to national recognition as a University that remains focused on students, the heart of all we do, with an unfailing “Accent on the Individual.”

This plan is our roadmap. It is our anchoring document. In the end, our hope is that this document will be more than the typical strategic plan – a lifeless manuscript that gathers dust on our University shelves. This is a genesis. This is the first step toward a rising future. This plan establishes the pillars that will lead to our vision. This document is not meant to be an inflexible set of mandates, but a living document, a framework that will be revised as we grow and meet our goals. As with any evolving organization, we hope to grow quickly and exceed our initial goals, reach beyond them, and become a nationally recognized University known for its healthy, welcoming campus and enduring values like integrity and service. Ashland will rise as a place of excellence, she will rise as a place of integrity, a place where all students are valued and empowered to be transformed and transform their communities, and the world.

I would like to thank the group that worked to develop this plan, the Strategic Planning Team. We also thank the many other students, faculty, alums and Board members who breathed life into this plan. We hope you are as excited about the plan, and the future it envisions, as we are. This plan articulates grand expectations – expectations we can not only meet, but exceed.

Thank you for taking the time to read this plan and become a part of Ashland Rising.

Dr. Carlos Campo,
President, Ashland University

Strategic Planning Committee

Dr. Scott Van Loo, Chair
Joyce Lamb, Chair, Board of Trustees
Dr. James Falter
Dr. Dawn Weber
Dr. Dr. Daniel Fox Karen Hagans
Dr. Dr. Jeffrey Weidenhamer
Our Mission
Ashland University, guided by our Christian heritage, is a comprehensive, private university that provides a transformative learning experience, shaping graduates who work, serve and lead with integrity in their local, national, and global communities.

Our Vision
Ashland University aspires to be a nationally-recognized private university, where traditions of excellence are fostered and students discern their life calling and thrive.

Core Values
Accent on the Individual
Pledges the best individual and collective efforts to challenge and encourage each member of the University within a supportive community.

Spirituality and Faith
Affirms Christian values as a core element of the University’s institutional identity, emphasizing faith in God, moral integrity and respect for the diversity of values and faith of each person in a community of learning.

Character Development
Promotes integrity, self-discipline, responsibility, compassion, leadership, service and good citizenship.

Academic Freedom
Supports free, open and critical inquiry for both students and faculty necessary for intellectual and professional development.

Excellence in Teaching
Emphasizes teaching supported by research and scholarship as the University’s central responsibility.

The Strategic Planning Team developed our mission, vision, and values based on feedback received from the broad campus community, including faculty, staff, students, board members and alumni. The plan was approved by the Board of Trustees on January 29, 2016.
INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY

1 PILLAR OF DISTINCTION:
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

BE A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED academic institution with a focus on exemplary teaching practices and extraordinary faculty-student engagement.

IP1. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 1
Create the most personalized, transformative educational experience possible. Ashland University’s Core Value of “Accent on the Individual” has been the defining aspect of the University for over 135 years. From recruitment to graduation and employment, we will establish a culture of personal attention that will transform each student and better prepare them for work and life.

IP1. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 2
Expand online offerings that reflect exemplary practices. Ashland University will further develop our online mode of delivery through the College of Online and Adult Studies. Guided by the core values of excellence and individual attention, we will develop flexible, high quality programs that meet our students’ needs.

IP1. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 3
Recruit, retain and develop exceptional faculty. Build a diverse pool of faculty who actively support the University’s unique mission, and teaching as a primary measure of academic excellence.

IP1. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 4
A demonstrated commitment to teaching excellence through the development of teacher-scholars. Capitalizing on our traditions of excellence in the field of education, AU will develop a national reputation as a University committed to teaching excellence and the development of teacher-scholars. Working with internal and external national experts, AU will create institutional practices that ensure outstanding teaching and learning is a way of life at AU.

IP1. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 5
Enhance the visibility and academic profile of the University. Academic excellence will be highlighted by enhancing our profile and thereby attracting higher performing students, as well as a stronger faculty and staff. AU will develop a comprehensive, strategic marketing plan that focuses on our compelling qualities, including graduate outcomes, academic quality, campus environment, traditions and athletic accomplishments. In addition, we will explore marketing strategies focused on growing new academic programs as well as those identified in our prioritization process.
2 PILAR OF DISTINCTION: OUR UNIQUE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

REFINE Ashland University’s identity as a unique university with a Christian heritage that guides University practices.

IP2. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 1
Establish and highlight the way our Brethren roots create a unique campus environment informed by our Christian heritage.
AU has always been guided by a Christian ethos that simultaneously celebrates our faith traditions and welcomes people of any background. Values like moral integrity, respect and service all derive from our heritage, and inform all aspects of our campus culture.

IP2. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 2
Improve existing and create new methods of character development activities aligned with Christian principles.
Our emerging leaders incubator, mission trips, community service projects, support organizations, retreats, living-learning communities, athletic participation and other activities and events will foster an environment that develops the whole person.

IP2. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 3
Revisit, create and celebrate campus traditions.
One of AU’s foremost strengths is our remarkable heritage. From student recruitment and retention to a vibrant campus life, traditions define college life as much as any other factor. This goal will ensure that our traditions, old and new, will shape and enliven our campus.

IP2. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 4
Become a recognized national model university that seeks greater understanding of issues related to faith and society.
At AU, we will initiate internal and external discussions, events and activities that help students make sense of the relationship between religious beliefs and the secular and intellectual world, as religion is central to some of society’s most contentious debates.

IP2. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 5
Ashland University will celebrate the unique ability of our rural setting to spur academic focus and achievement – a key to our rich student experience and its growing leadership in education and research.
Ashland’s founders carefully chose our bucolic setting to help students stay focused on their studies in a vibrant campus community. Ashland today celebrates our local and regional community, where covered bridges and Amish villages mix with urban centers with world-class cultural attractions.
3 INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY

PILLAR OF DISTINCTION: EXEMPLARY FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

OPTIMIZE our potential through greater efficiency, effectiveness and productivity by supporting strategic fiscal growth and development.

IP3. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 1
Develop a comprehensive, data-driven budget model with an annual target margin that directs available resources to achieve the greatest missional value and return. We will regularize our budget processes, driven by verified, consistent data.

IP3. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 2
Undertake targeted enrollment growth. To achieve our vision, AU must increase enrollment in program areas that have the greatest potential. The strategic enrollment management unit plan (SEM) will achieve this goal through careful analysis and implementation of a comprehensive enrollment strategy.

IP3. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 3
Pursue fundraising, grant opportunities, and other Advancement strategies for increasing the University’s financial resources. We will expand our advancement strategy to engage more partners, and embark on a comprehensive campaign to further launch Ashland Rising 2020.

IP3. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 4
Develop industry-leading fiscal practices. AU will develop an institutional data management system (IDMS) to help inform all fiscal decisions. The goal of IDMS would be to make institutional data easily accessible, reliable, consistent and secure to support informed planning, decision-making, and communication across campus. We will leverage this data for strategic decision making at all levels.

IP3. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 5
Update the existing facilities master plan to include enhancement of facilities and learning environments that reflect the high quality of an AU education. Our facilities are a reflection of our commitment to excellence and we will continue to invest in our campus infrastructure.
PROVIDE a healthy, safe and supportive campus environment.

IP4. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 1
Provide innovative programs that promote sustained healthy behaviors for students, faculty and staff. Ashland University’s healthy campus environment will be one of the University’s hallmarks. Each unit will develop plans to help ensure we sustain this goal long term.

IP4. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 2
Provide unique and ongoing programming for meaningful faculty-student interaction that expands students’ sensibilities about their role as global citizens. A supportive campus environment demands that we are intentional about keeping our students informed about cultural complexity, and our faculty will work with the administration to help achieve this goal.

IP4. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 3
Engage students in a comprehensive experiential learning environment which incorporates campus programming and services that contribute to their personal development and academic success. From living-learning communities to internships and more, AU will create a rich environment of learning while doing on campus.

IP4. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 4
Maintain and support an NCAA Division II athletics program that is competitive and consistent with Ashland’s academic mission to educate and graduate students, is committed to excellence, enriches the student experience, and enriches the AU community. At AU, we believe that active participation in athletics, as a participant and as a supporter, promotes healthy behaviors and adds to the overall campus experience. Our commitment to a healthy campus environment will be supported by a full integration of athletic activity into student and campus life.

IP4. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 5
AU will further develop and implement ongoing student, faculty and staff development to nurture AU’s welcoming, increasingly diverse campus culture. Ashland has long been known as “The World Headquarters of Nice People,” and AU will embody this sentiment as it develops a campus culture that openly welcomes more diverse students, faculty and staff.
ENHANCED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

IP5. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 1
Improve community, regional, national and global connections to align AU’s educational, cultural and athletic programs and services with the broader community, and assess the outcomes of these efforts.
We will build a culture of continuous improvement as we deeply engage our local, regional, national, and global communities.

IP5. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 2
Assess the nature and number of current “community connections,” and bring them into a cohesive, strategic whole.
We will identify and unify current activities and programs that reflect our commitment to service and engagement.

IP5. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 3
Focus all community engagement on aspects of student learning and practice to ensure that the goal of our work is to enhance student learning.
Engagement efforts will be intentionally linked to student learning for maximum impact.

IP5. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 4
Advance university-community connections, nurturing entrepreneurship and identifying pathways to engage citizens in the economic development of Ashland and the region.
AU will be more intentional about serving as an engine of economic development for Ashland and the surrounding area.

IP5. ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL 5
Engage the community through cultural events like theater and musical productions, athletics, the art gallery, lectures and symposia.
AU has always been a cultural resource for the area, and we will further develop ways to serve the broader community as a vibrant hub for activities and programs.
Our institutional priorities reflect our mission, vision, and values and are visionary statements representing our high-level direction as an institution. We are presenting our tier one strategic plan for Board consideration and approval. Once approved, the tier two plans will be created—many are in process or have been drafted—to align with the tier one plan. We created our strategic priorities by asking, “What sort of University do we want to be and how do we get there?” and used environmental scanning processes to determine our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Organizational goals describe our common expectations as a University. They often require a consistent and collective focus across multiple organizational units. We set our organizational goals by asking, “How will we accomplish our institutional priorities?” These organizational goals include ideas and information collected through a comprehensive process at all levels. The comments collected at each step and from every part of the University ensured the widest possible input.

Both institutional priorities and organizational goals should be reviewed continually as part of our ongoing assessment and continuous improvement process.
TIER TWO
UNIT PLANNING
The second tier of strategic planning, annual unit planning, is the point at which each defined assessment unit aligns and adopts the institutional priorities and organizational goals established by the University. Annual unit planning consists of unit goals, tactics, key performance indicators, and actions taken in response to assessments, which close the overall assessment loop and ensure that the strategic plan stays relevant. We set our unit goals by asking, “What will this particular area do to help achieve our overall organizational goals?” Most unit goals are developed ‘bottom up’ as they are defined and refined through a research-based review of assessment results and new information from environmental scanning. Some unit goals can also be established ‘top down’ in that some organizational goals are set at higher administrative levels and are expected to be fulfilled in each assessment unit across the University.

In either approach, assessment units will establish specific tactics by asking “How will we accomplish our goals?” Tactics are defined by the unit leader in conjunction with those responsible for accomplishing the tactic. Each tactic has associated key performance indicators (KPIs) used to evaluate quality, responsiveness, and efficiency. These KPIs may be qualitative or quantitative and are based on processes that are already established or that the unit commits to establishing. To measure the degree of performance across each tactic, expected outcomes are set at threshold (minimum standard of performance expected), target (preferred level of performance), and high performance (exceptional achievement of results). Expected outcomes are aspirational, yet realistic and are expected to be set on nationally formed data or benchmarks, where appropriate.

Where possible, KPIs will be established from authoritative sources to help units monitor their progress. To achieve certain tactics, actions are established to help ensure that the data collected leads to quality improvement changes. The University annually reviews and monitors unit goals, tactics, and expected outcomes established through annual planning. Appropriate actions in response to the data collection are then taken.

TIER THREE
INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE PLANNING
The third tier of strategic planning, known as individual performance goals, links the strategic plan, unit goals, tactics, and actions to the goals of individuals throughout the University. Individual performance goals are included in the annual performance planning and appraisal process where performance expectations of an individual member of the workforce are established. Individual performance goals are defined by the supervisor in conjunction with the employee. Individual performance goals also have expected outcomes, similar to those in annual unit planning. Each expected outcome is weighted, where all expected outcomes equal 100 percent. These are monitored annually at the assessment unit level, with results of individual performance submitted to Human Resources.

The planning architecture allows all assessment units and individuals in the organization to adopt and align their actions with the institutional priorities and organizational goals of the University. Thus, working together, we can accomplish the vision we have set for Ashland University: To be a nationally-recognized University that transforms students who transform their communities.