Alumni, 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. 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, alumni 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
(August 2015 – January 2016)
Jason Barnhart
Executive Director of Christian Ministries
Dr. Carlos Campo
President
Karen Hagens
Executive Director of Career Services
Dr. James Falter
Faculty, Business Administration
Dr. Daniel Fox
Faculty, Chair of the Hospitality/Metropolitan Management/Fashion Merchandising Department
Joyce Lamb
Chair, Board of Trustees
Dr. Scott Van Loo
Vice President of Administration and Strategic Planning, Chair of Strategic Planning
Dr. Dawn Weber
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Jeffrey Weidenhamer
Faculty, Chemistry/Geology/Physics
Dr. Jeff Sikkenga
Faculty, Faculty Senate Vice President
Dr. Stephen Storck
Vice President, Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Scott Van Loo
Vice President of Administration and Strategic Planning, Chair of Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning Core Team
(January 2016 – present)
Jason Barnhart
Executive Director of Christian Ministries
Dr. Carlos Campo
President
Dr. Eun-Woo Chang
Provost
Dr. Hannah Clayborne
Vice President of Student Affairs
Patrick Ewing
Vice President of Facilities and Planning
Josh Hughes
Director of Human Resources
Dr. Todd Marshall
Associate Provost
Margaret Pomer
Vice President of Advancement
Dr. Deanna Romano
Faculty, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Ashland University Today

Founded in 1878 as Ashland College, the name of the institution was changed to Ashland University on May 12, 1989. This change was a practical and logical step based on the many diverse undergraduate, graduate and professional programs offered by the institution.

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.

Our Core Values
Accent on the Individual; Spirituality and Faith; Character Development; Academic Freedom; Excellence in Teaching

Ashland University places great emphasis on the importance of each individual. The phrase Accent on the Individual has been our motto for many years and we believe it characterizes the fundamental nature of our campus environment. It means that our concern for the student extends beyond ensuring a quality education in the classroom and laboratory to include a commitment to provide a stimulating and supportive environment in every respect. Translating the ideas of the Mission Statement into the realities of everyday life is the responsibility of each Ashland University employee. These ideas must be evidenced daily in the classroom, residence halls, each teaching site, on the playing fields and in our interaction with others. We work to ensure that the goal of each of us here at Ashland University is to translate the words of our Mission Statement into a true reflection of who and what we actually are and intend to be in the future.
Our faculty teach a diverse curriculum that features more than 100 programs of study. Our programs include liberal arts, pre-professional and professional undergraduate programs in addition to graduate programs.

A recent survey revealed that 93% of recent Ashland University graduates are employed or continuing their studies in graduate school within six months of their graduation.

Our first-year freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate has improved by 11% since 2009. We now retain 80% of our first-year freshmen.

We have over 300 total international students at Ashland University with our MBA program being the most popular program.

We offer 22 NCAA Division II sports with nearly 500 student athletes participating. Our athletic program has finished in the Top 15 of the Learfield Directors’ Cup rankings for 10 consecutive years.

We are ranked as a top tier college and university in the National Universities category of the recently released 2017 college rankings by U.S. News and World Report. The National Universities classification is restricted to universities offering doctoral programs and involved in research.

We play a major role in the region’s economy, and we work closely with a number of employers and partners to ensure that we are responding to the economic culture of the surrounding community, as we give our students every opportunity to thrive personally and professionally. In addition, we are always looking at strategic opportunities to spur economic development in our city and region, knowing that great universities like Ashland must be “Engines of Innovation.”
The Strategic Planning Process

We have adopted a three-tier process for strategic planning. Tier One focuses on establishing high-level goals, Tier Two on unit planning and Tier Three on individual goals.

**Tier One – High Level Goals**
Our institutional priorities reflect our mission, vision, and values and are visionary statements representing our high-level direction as an institution. Strategic priorities were created by asking, “What sort of University do we want to be and how do we get there?” and using 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 organizational goals by asking, “How will we accomplish our institutional priorities?” These goals were developed through a comprehensive process at all levels of the institution.

**Tier Two – Unit Planning**
The second tier of our strategic plan is the point at which each defined organizational unit aligns and adopts the institutional priorities and organizational goals established by the University. Planning at this level consists of defining what must be accomplished (objectives), how it will be accomplished (action items) and measuring, tracking and reporting outcomes (continuous assessment).

Plan objectives have been set by asking, “What must we do to achieve our overall organizational goals?” Each objective has been delegated to the care of a primary unit (University division or department) responsible for developing action items and continually measuring, tracking and reporting outcomes. Expected outcomes are aspirational, yet realistic and are expected to be set on nationally formed data or benchmarks where appropriate.

**Tier Three – Individual Performance Planning**
This level links the strategic plan and unit planning to the goals of individuals throughout campus. 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.

The planning architecture allows units and individuals to adopt and align their actions with the institutional priorities, goals, objectives and actions as defined in the strategic plan.
President Dr. Carlos Campo initiated a kick-off meeting on July 22, 2015, titled “Strategic Planning Foundational Session.” Committee members were charged to identify three to five foundational “Pillars of Distinction” to serve as strategic imperatives for the university. A campus-wide collaborative process ensued throughout the fall of 2015, resulting in five Pillars of Distinction:

- Academic Excellence
- Our Unique Christian Identity
- Exemplary Fiscal Stewardship
- Supportive Campus Environment
- Enhanced Community Engagement

Figuratively, the pillars rest on the mission and values of the institution and serve as the support mechanism enabling the institution to achieve its vision. With the Pillars of Distinction established, broad-based goals were developed under each pillar leading to the foundation of the strategic plan (Tier One). This portion of the plan was completed with Board of Trustees approval on January 28, 2016.
Academic Excellence

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
PILLAR 2 | Our Unique Christian Identity

Refine Ashland University’s identity as a unique university with a Christian heritage that guides University practice.

2.1 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.

2.2 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.

2.3 Revive, 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.

2.4 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.
PILLAR 3 | Exemplary Fiscal Stewardship

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

3.1 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.

3.2 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 (SEM) will achieve this goal through careful analysis and implementation of a comprehensive enrollment strategy.

3.3 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.”

3.4 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.

3.5 Enhance campus facilities and learning environments to 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.

3.6 Recruit, retain and develop productive and successful administration and staff.

We will focus our efforts on recruiting and retaining employees who support our mission and values.
Provide a healthy, safe and supportive campus environment.

4.1 Provide innovative programs that promote sustained healthy behaviors for students, staff and faculty. 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.

4.2 Provide unique and ongoing programming for meaningful faculty, staff and student interaction that expands students’ sensibilities about their role in the global community. 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.

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

4.4 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, and enriches the student experience and 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.

4.5 Create and implement ongoing student, faculty and staff development to promote a welcoming and increasingly diverse 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.
PILLAR 5 | Enhanced Community Engagement

Be an active contributor to our local and regional community.

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 Focus community engagement efforts on the goal of enhancing student learning and practice.

Engagement efforts will be intentionally linked to student learning for maximum impact.

5.4 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.

5.5 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 of activities and programs.
Next: Operationalizing the Plan
As with any good plan, it must be operationalized and carefully followed in order to be successful. With the foundation established, Tier Two and Tier Three planning are underway and will continue throughout the duration of the plan. This portion of the plan is outlined on the Ashland University Strategic Planning website located at www.ashland.edu/strategicplan. Here you can track strategic objectives and other relevant updates under the “Progress” menu link.

Ashland University can proudly declare that we are boldly moving into the future with this foundation created over our 138-year history:

- a faculty that is committed to teaching excellence and one that truly believes in educating the whole person;
- a fine, dedicated staff that understands the need to provide individual attention;
- an exceptional student body that is learning, growing and finding their place in the world;
- distinguished alumni who are leading and serving and whose influence reaches all corners of the world;
- and a community that recognizes our campus as a vital educational, economic and cultural resource for Northeast Ohio.

When realized, “Ashland Rising 2020” will assist in taking our institution to new heights and our current and future students will benefit even greater from our focused efforts. Please join us as we complete this journey together.