



Strategic Plan

Annual Report: 2022-2023 Academic Year

The Mercy 2025 Strategic Plan, launched in October 2020, specifies four strategic goals and related objectives that are rooted in the institution's mission of providing transformative educational experiences to students. The development of the plan was informed by evidence from focus groups conducted with faculty, staff and students; data-rich self-studies of the first-year experience and of the institution during the decennial review; institutional indicators; and market data on enrollment and regional trends.

The strategic goals center on four areas: teaching and learning; support for student success; affordability and financial health; and building college community. To evaluate progress on the plan, metrics for each strategic goal were identified and reviewed by the Strategic Planning Committee in spring and fall 2019. Emerging outcomes for these metrics are reviewed annually by that Committee.

This document provides an update on each metric and a summary of the key activities that contributed toward our strategy in the third year of the plan. The timeframe for this report is July 2022 through June 2023.

Goal 1: Teaching and Learning — Key Initiatives

- 1. Programs Registered or Revised for the 2022-2023 Academic Year:**
 - BS Health Science-Clinical Care concentration
 - MS Computer Science, Concentration in AI and Machine Learning
 - Advanced Certificate, School Building Leadership
- 2. Registered Curriculum Changes:**
 - MS Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
 - MS Educational Supervision
 - MS Educational Administration
 - MS Early Childhood/Childhood & Ed, B-6
 - MS Early Childhood/Childhood Ed/Students With Disabilities, B-6
 - MS Childhood Education, 1-6
 - MS Childhood Education & Students with Disabilities, 1-6
 - MS Early Childhood Education, B-2
 - MS Adolescence Education, 7-12
 - MS Adolescence Education, 7-12 (Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, English, Math, Physics, Social Studies, Spanish)
 - MS Adolescence Education/Students with Disabilities General, 7-12 (Biology, English, Math, Social Studies)
- 3. Key Courses:** Interventions to improve student performance in key courses continued during this academic year. These interventions include: co-requisite support in gateway Mathematics and English, as well as integrated learning supports from Math or English Learning Assistants in those courses, and improved pedagogy and supplemental instruction in Anatomy & Physiology I, a course required for all health professions majors. An initial review of the set of courses fulfilling gateway Mathematics requirements was also carried out so that first-year students can fulfill the general education mathematics requirement in a way that optimally aligns with their major.
- 4. Middle States Self-Study:** The Working Groups for the Self-Study process were convened and charged with their work during this period. They investigated their respective areas by conducting interviews and gathering evidence. Then, they drafted their chapters. The evidence inventory was also set up and populated with evidence surfaced by the Working Groups and other community members.
- 5. Nursing:** Under the leadership of Interim Dean Susan LaRocco, the Nursing Programs developed a set of initiatives to improve NCLEX scores. These initiatives focused on curriculum revision, student preparation, and faculty professional development. After a national search, Dean Kenya Beard was appointed in May 2023. The Nursing Programs separated from the School of Health and Natural Sciences forming a School of Nursing in July 2023.
- 6. Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Inclusive Excellence project:** The HHMI Inclusive Excellence Initiative expanded three key projects in AY 2022-23. First, as part of the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Data Ambassadors Initiative, faculty representatives from each School collaborated with Institutional Research and the Office of Educational Assessment to create a framework, including Tableau data visualizations, for assessing course performance equity gaps during annual assessment retreats, laying the groundwork for creating course and program-level equity plans. Second, HHMI Inclusive Excellence Teaching Fellows expanded to multiple disciplines, with full- and part-time faculty developing equity-minded interventions to inform inclusive teaching practices across the institution. Third, Student Education Consultants from multiple academic programs participated in the Learners-As-Partners program, informing development of first-year curricula at Mercy.

7. **Grant Activity:** Faculty and staff engaged in grant-funded activity with multiple agencies, resulting in 12 new grant awards in addition to 23 ongoing grants. The six-year average (excluding HEERF) is \$8,654,428; the 2022-2023 total was \$10,439,995, primarily from Federal agencies (\$6.7M), but also including funding from New York State (\$3M), New York City (\$27K), subawards (\$480K), and foundations (\$240K). One highlight is the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration grant award, which will receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education of \$4,600,000 over five years. This project will train pre-service and certified school counselors to provide inclusive and evidence-based mental health services to K-12 students in partnership with the Mount Vernon City School District. In addition to field-placement opportunities and stipend support, interns will receive experiential training through a service-learning project and will also earn designations as a Mental Health Specialist and a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Specialist through programming developed and offered by the American School Counselor Association. Two other major institutional projects include STEM Ready: USED Title III Part F - HSI STEM and Articulation (\$5M) and ACCESS: USED Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (\$3M).
8. **Center for Academic Excellence and Innovation:** As Covid-19 restrictions eased and more students returned to campus, the CAEI focused on increasing the number of students receiving tutoring services and the proportion of sessions held in person. CAEI was designated as the central repository for progress reports earmarked for tutoring, increasing the proportion of referred students who received tutoring. CAEI increased efforts to collaborate with faculty and administrators in the academic units to identify areas of need and potential tutors and implement the AIM2G program.
9. **Center for Teaching and Learning:** CTL worked to enhance faculty knowledge and use of effective teaching and learning practices by providing individual consultations, keynote speakers, and workshops. CTL expanded its communities of practice to include sessions focused on inclusive pedagogy, scholarship of teaching and learning, and diversity dialogues. To broaden access, CTL built out a Blackboard repository with recordings, PowerPoints, and scholarship utilized at professional development events. To scale pedagogical support across a wider range of faculty and to enhance ease of access, CTL began to create self-paced learning modules, including a Best Teaching Practices course, in which four evidence-informed teaching practices are explored with actionable steps that can be applied across disciplines, and an Inclusive Pedagogy course featuring the voices and guidance of Mercy thought leaders with expertise in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.
10. **General Education:** As we work towards a full rollout of a new curriculum in fall 2025, the General Education Design Team involved a broad set of stakeholders this year in developing a new mission for general education and creating new and revising existing general education learning outcomes. The mission and the learning outcomes were approved by the Faculty Senate within this reporting period. In addition, the Design Team began developing a series of general education models enacting the new general education mission.

Goal 2: Student Success — Key Initiatives

1. **Online Learning:** Mercy Online and the Office of Information Technology Services created a taskforce made up of staff and faculty from each School to examine learning management systems (LMSs) and determine whether they met the needs of Mercy’s students and faculty. The features of each LMS were demonstrated by the Mercy Online team. Taking into account the feedback from the taskforce, as well as financial and technological factors, Mercy University decided to move towards Blackboard Ultra as the official Learning Management System starting in 2025 (as a pilot in Spring 2025 and campus-wide launch in Fall 2025). In addition to the LMS Taskforce, the office of Online Learning focused on student success through further development of Master Courses, which ensure the quality of the online courses and programs that are a part of the Master Course initiative. Master Courses are created through a collaboration between a faculty subject matter expert and an instructional designer. The Master Courses are fully developed courses that can be deployed in multiple course sections and are designed according to Quality Matters criteria. To date, 77 Master Courses have been completed.
2. **Fall 2020 New Student Cohort:** Targeted outreach to students who began in fall 2020 but stopped out along the way resulted in 25 students returning in Fall 2023. This student population, which started college during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, has struggled to persist, and so they have been a good target for piloting innovative advising and financial supports. In addition, efforts to graduate other subpopulations of stopped-out students were launched via collaboration across departments. This included an effort to engage “almost finishers” – those who paused their education just a few credits shy of graduation. Dozens of these students were able to complete final requirements after another round of review of their progress toward degrees.
3. **Academic Policies:** Review of transfer-credit policies began during this period. Also, the Incomplete Grades policy for undergraduate students was changed to provide students more time (a full term rather than only 30 days) to complete an incomplete grade, with the aim of reducing the proportion of incomplete grades that turn into Fs. In addition, after hiring a new Director for the Office of Educational Assessment, we began to establish a framework for assessing credit for prior learning.
4. **Summer Scholars** was launched as a program to help students who did not take 30 credits during their freshman year to accumulate up to 6 more credits by taking two general education courses over the summer at no cost to them. Paired courses were offered in Dobbs Ferry and Manhattan. In total, 34 students participated in the program. 97% of courses attempted were completed successfully, adding an average of 5.6 credits per person to advance students’ progress to their degree.
5. **Career Preparation:** Two grants focused on career preparation – sponsored by the Yes We Must Coalition and the Council of Independent Colleges – were obtained during this period. Each grant provides faculty with opportunities to enrich the curriculum with career preparation training. The projects focus on majors identified as not having sufficient career preparation. In addition, the Google Techwise partnership continued during this year, providing participating students with training in software development and mentorship from Google engineers. Also, the Mercy Internship Grant program supports students participating in an unpaid internship to earn financial support from the institution with periodic payments to offset expenses associated with travel, food, or anything else needed to successfully complete their internships. A Career/DEI Inventory was developed with input from all schools, tracking career activities and experiential learning opportunities for all academic programs. The Career and Professional Development Center supported these efforts via consultations with faculty, career fairs, and workshops on résumé and interview preparation. In addition, the center hosted Career Academy workshops and employer information sessions both in person and virtually, such as an Accounting Night and a Career Pathways in Biotechnology event in partnership with Regeneron.
6. **First Year Seminar:** Faculty laid out the foundations for the design of a First Year Seminar course that will be at the center of the first-year experience in the new general education curriculum. The course is being

designed with an equity-minded approach, with a plan to pilot and assess the design during the 2023-24 academic year.

7. **Global Honors:** In 2022, the Global Honors Program achieved a 90%+ persistence rate for the fourth consecutive year since the reorganization of the program in 2018. The first cohort of honors students admitted under the new model (in 2018) had a four-year graduation rate of 70%. The program also brought a group of 8 students (including 5 presenters) to the Northeast Regional Honors Conference in Pittsburgh.
8. **Dean's List Celebrations:** The Committee on Student Success and Engagement organized a Dean's List Celebration each semester for students and their families at each campus location to celebrate those who achieved this prestigious accomplishment. Students were greeted by the University President and Provost and were formally acknowledged before their peers, faculty, and academic leadership.
9. **Libraries:** In the Fall 2022 semester, the Mercy University Libraries developed an experiential learning opportunity for work-study students to acquire and strengthen skills for academic success and future employment. In collaboration with the Career and Professional Development department, the program covered topics such as electronic database searching, workplace professionalism, interview preparation, and salary negotiation.
10. **Advising:** PACT mentors and College Opportunity Program counselors offered academic coaching and risk-based advising intervention to students on their caseloads.
11. **Campus Life:** Campus Life events included New Student Orientation, Transfer Orientation, Welcome Week, Founders Festival, Thanksgiving, and Spring Fling. Campus Life also organized diversity-themed programming around Pride Month, Domestic Violence Awareness, Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, and Women's History Month.
12. **Student Wellness:** Wellness programs for students were expanded during this time frame. This included continued partnership with BetterMynd, an online therapy platform for college students, offering students access to free video-therapy sessions and a diverse network of licensed mental health counselors.
13. **Resident Assistants:** Residential Assistant training consisted of topics such as Safe Zones, understanding your own identities, learning about identities of others, intersectionality of identities, communication, approaching peer conflict, and balancing being a leader/role model with being a peer. This training better prepared RAs to understand the diversity of the student body they are interacting with. Resident Assistants were trained by offices such as campus safety; student conduct and community standards; campus life; operations; health and wellness; and Title IX. RAs were assessed to evaluate their understanding of the content. Supplemental training was then created based on survey responses. Resident Assistants hosted their own events to encourage more engagement on campus.
14. **International Students:** International Student Services hosted events such as International Education Week, where Mercy hosts study abroad info sessions, sessions on the value of education abroad, a trip to the United Nations, as well as a career workshop.
15. **Athletics:** Study halls were provided for student athletes. Also, Student Advisory Committee meetings provided a forum for student athletes to meet, provide team updates, and advocate for their peers by discussing concerns and brainstorming regarding areas of improvement.
16. **CSTEP:** Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) offered their summer research program to train STEM students on basic skills and fundamentals of research to better prepare them for graduate (master's or doctoral) programs.

Goal 3: Affordability and Financial Health — Key Initiatives

1. **Financial Strength:** Mercy achieved an operating surplus of 6.7% during FY 23, compared with a 6.3% operating surplus in FY 22. The College's Endowment remains stable, with a total endowment balance of \$325.8M (95% of which is unrestricted) as of June 30, 2023. Mercy's endowment achieved an annualized return of 11.3% (net of fees) for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023. Standard & Poor's (S&P) Global Ratings services for Higher Education reaffirmed Mercy's 'A' credit rating in 2022.
2. **Tuition:** Mercy's full time undergraduate tuition rate of \$21,236 for AY22-23 remains one of the lowest tuition rates of private, four-year institutions in the region.
3. **Scholarships:** Raised \$404K for the Mercy Scholars Program to fund Cohort 8 with 24 students.
4. **Oxford International:** Mercy finalized its partnership with Oxford International, which provides new pathways for international students (both graduate and undergraduate) to enroll at Mercy. Oxford also now runs an ESL program at the Manhattan campus.
5. **Teachouts:** During this period, Mercy became a teachout partner for Medaille University and Alliance University. The latter resulted in significant numbers of transfer students. Also, the College of New Rochelle (CNR) teachout concluded during this period. As of January 2023, of the 1,513 CNR teachout students, 57% had graduated, 14% were continuing, and 29% had stopped out; of the 293 second-degree nursing students, 99% had graduated, less than 1% had stopped out; of the 359 traditional nursing students, 86% had graduated, 6% were continuing, and 8% had stopped out. Also as of January 2023, of the 37 full-time faculty who came from CNR to Mercy, 18 (49%) were still employed at Mercy.
6. **Course Section Management Workgroup:** This group, which includes AUHs and representatives from the Provost's Office, Student Affairs, and the Registrar, continued to meet regularly to review capacity of course and program offerings across campuses, monitor course fill rates, and ensure availability of course and program offerings. The close attention to course scheduling has begun to reverse the pandemic's impact on average class sizes, as Fall 2022 average class sizes increased towards pre-COVID levels.
7. **Upgrad:** A partnership with the international education provider UpGrad was developed during this period by Mercy's Division of Workforce Credentialing and Community Impact. The project promises to bring international enrollment to Mercy into a Master's-level track in Computer Science with a concentration in machine learning and artificial intelligence.

Goal 4: College Community — Key Initiatives

1. **Prison Education Program:** In partnership with Hudson Link, we deliver associate and bachelor degree programs to students at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. In AY 2022-23, we resumed normal operations post-COVID, serving 125 students and awarding 37 degrees. We are exploring how to better engage program graduates and facilitate degree completion for students who exit the facility.
2. **High School Achievement Program:** This program engages local high schools (18 in Westchester County, 1 in Orange County) to provide college-level coursework to high school students. In AY 2022-23, the program enrolled 1,113 unique students in 59 courses, taught by 50 instructors.
3. **Full-Time Faculty Recruitment and Retention:** Intentional efforts in AY 2022-23 to strengthen full-time faculty recruitment processes focused on search committee composition; language in posted advertisements; broad advertisement; and equitable and fair practices in application review, interviewing, and finalist selection. To improve full-time faculty retention, we have been augmenting mentorship for junior faculty; providing workshops and templates to support faculty seeking tenure, promotion, and contract renewals; allocating funds for academic conference traveling; and working to provide more efficient pre- and post-award grant supports.
4. **Mercy University Center for STEM Education Community Outreach:** With support of the Verizon Innovative Learning Initiative, the Center for STEM Education leads a series of family open houses (40 families reached) and runs a summer program (120 7th-8th grade students reached). In addition, the Center conducts a Saturday STEM Academy (112 K-12th grade students reached), engages in partnerships with local school districts for teacher development (10 districts), provides grant-funded teacher support, and hosts a series of leadership initiatives.
5. **Adjunct Faculty Development Fund.** The first run of the Adjunct Faculty Development Fund award competition was held in Spring 2023. Fourteen recipients received awards (the total of all awards was \$10,000) to support pedagogic and curricular development projects. Funded projects included Carlos Sanchez's design of applied curricula for cybersecurity courses; Beth Gersh-Nesic's creation of self-guided "treasure hunts" of the Met's art collections, centering non-Western work; and Susan Quinn DeJoy's new and revised course outlines and teaching resources for BIOL105.
6. **University Status:** The New York State Board of Regents recently changed its requirements for a higher education institution to become a university. Mercy College met those new requirements and, in June 2023, received the notification from the New York State Board of Regents that its application to become Mercy University was approved. In preparation for the change from college to university status, a rebranding campaign was developed during this period.
7. **Career Fair:** Mercy's Office of Career and Professional Development hosted its first in-person Career Fair in four years, with record attendance by students and employers.
8. **Student Emergency Fund:** Nearly \$25,000 was distributed through the University's Student Emergency Fund.
9. **Community Events:** Community events were held in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, Veterans Day, Black History Month, Women's History Month, Pride Month and Juneteenth. In addition, the College organized its Seventh Annual Women's Empowerment Conference in March and its 23rd Annual International Film Festival in April.
10. **Seal of Excelencia:** The College's application for the Seal of Excelencia was successful, after a series of interviews that took place in the fall 2022 semester with Mercy leadership and Excelencia in Education leadership. The Seal recognizes Mercy as an institution that has demonstrated that its practices provide intentional supports for Latino students.

11. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** In a commitment to support the mission of Mercy University and its diverse campus community, an interdepartmental group was formed to build a diversity, equity, and inclusion website. The website will articulate the diversity initiatives happening at the institution, bridge gaps in the community, and bring awareness to equity and inclusion matters, while increasing a sense of belonging for students, faculty, and staff.
12. **Big Read:** With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), in partnership with Arts Midwest, Mercy supported a community-wide reading program centered on the book *Infinite Country* by Patricia Engel. The program was designed to broaden understanding of the community in and around Mercy. Events took place throughout the academic year, September 2022 to April 2023, at all three Mercy campuses, online, and at the Greenburgh Public Library in Elmsford.
13. **Capital Improvements:** Additions were made to the Dobbs Ferry campus to enhance the spirit of community for all. These include the construction of a garden alongside Broadway and a state-of-the-art outdoor pavilion.
14. **Alumni Relations:** Held over 60 alumni events throughout the year focused on engaging both Mercy and College of New Rochelle (CNR) alumni. Events included the Alumni of Distinction Awards ceremony, launch of the Sr. Dorothy Ann Kelly speaker series, class reunions and professional development workshops.
15. **Community Outreach Team:** Continued to develop the Women’s Leadership Group (which established quarterly meetings with close to two dozen women who are leaders in the community) and deepened connections with community-based organizations, government officials, and non-profits. This team was also responsible for organizing a major event that brought 250 people to Mercy’s Westchester campus, to hear a conversation between Indra Nooyi, former chairman and CEO of PepsiCo, and Eva Fernández, Provost and VP for Academic Affairs at Mercy.
16. **Connecting Minority Communities Grant:** In the summer of 2022, Mercy was awarded a \$2.6M grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. The grant provides complimentary laptops and Internet access to under-resourced Mercy students. The grant also allows Mercy to provide digital-skills training to non-students, with a focus on the communities surrounding Mercy in Southern Westchester and the Bronx. Execution of the services proposed in the grant is split between the Office of Information Technology and the Division of Workforce Credentialing and Community Impact.
17. **White Plains Hospital CMA Program:** The Division of Workforce Credentialing and Community Impact partnered with White Plains Hospital to develop and deliver a certificate program aimed at upskilling current and new employees at WPH to receive licensure and work in the hospital as Certified Medical Assistants. The first cohort completed the program in April 2023.