



SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

2026-2031 Tactical Plan

PRIORITY 1

Define and Deliver Southwestern's Distinctive Value

Core intent: Clarify and deliver a distinctive and compelling Southwestern experience that integrates liberal arts & sciences learning, co-curricular opportunities, and professional pathways.

Core Question: Are more high-demand students choosing Southwestern?

1.1 Elevate Southwestern's Differentiators to Enhance Institutional Positioning

Strengthen and clearly articulate the distinctive elements of the Southwestern Experience to differentiate Southwestern among liberal arts & sciences colleges and position us competitively in key markets.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 1.1:

- 1.1.1 Define and communicate Southwestern's distinctive value by clearly articulating the core elements of our academic, co-curricular, and place-based experience.
- 1.1.2 Align institutional messaging to highlight Southwestern's commitments to public engagement, social justice, and being a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).
- 1.1.3 Position environmental and financial sustainability as a visible and integrated element of Southwestern's identity across academics, student engagement, and operations.
- 1.1.4 Demonstrate the competitive value of the Southwestern Experience by clearly connecting liberal arts & sciences learning to professional pathways.
- 1.1.5 Leverage the SU 560 development as an emerging place-based extension of the Southwestern Experience-that reinforces and enhances Southwestern's distinctive identity.
- 1.1.6 Strengthen recruitment storytelling by engaging faculty, staff, students, and alumni in communicating Southwestern's value proposition.
- 1.1.7 Support ongoing faculty-student research and storytelling about Southwestern's distinctive history and identity.

1.2 Strengthen the Curriculum to Align Mission and Market Demand

Description

Develop and refine academic programs and learning experiences that connect Southwestern's distinctive liberal arts & sciences approach with emerging student interests and professional opportunities.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 1.2:

- 1.2.1 Invest in targeted development and refinement to academic offerings that align with student demand and professional relevance and are enriched by our liberal arts & sciences framework.
- 1.2.2 Reimagine and reinvigorate the School of Fine Arts by addressing curriculum, programming, and facility redesign opportunities and then strategically rebuilding faculty lines.
- 1.2.3 Align and embed Smith Library Center programming to strengthen academic programming and resources that support interdisciplinary learning, research, and experiential opportunities.
- 1.2.4 Coordinate and elevate a select number of interdisciplinary programs as visible anchors of Southwestern's commitments to social justice and academic freedom.
- 1.2.5 Integrate AI literacy across disciplines as part of a human-centered and ethics-informed liberal arts & sciences education.
- 1.2.6 Redesign and reframe the General Education curriculum to ensure students can synthesize their learning across disciplines and clearly articulate the distinctive value of their Southwestern liberal arts & sciences education.
- 1.2.7 Reimagine and redefine the Paideia with Distinction program to attract and retain high-demand students drawn to an enriched educational experience.
- 1.2.8 Establish articulation agreements with partner institutions to drive enrollment, enhance graduate school pathways, and expand direct access to majors not represented in our curriculum.

1.3 Define and Deliver the Pirate Plan to Connect Liberal Arts & Sciences Learning and Co-Curricular Experiences with Career Pathways

Description

Implement the Pirate Plan as the signature four-year framework of the Southwestern Experience connecting academic learning, student engagement, High-Impact Experiences (HIEs), public engagement, and career preparation so that every student experiences a clear pathway from learning to post-graduate outcomes and lives of purpose.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 1.3:

1.3.1 Institute a coordinated 4-Year Pirate Plan framework (with dedicated leadership) that aligns academic advising, experiential learning, professional development, and student engagement, inclusion and belonging.

1.3.2 Position the Pirate Plan as the central mechanism for delivering Southwestern's distinctive value.

1.4 Make Experiential Learning Central to the Southwestern Experience

Description

Increase faculty-student research, public engagement, internships, and study abroad and study away opportunities that connect classroom learning to real-world impact.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 1.4:

1.4.1 Expand student access to High-Impact Experiences (HIEs), especially study abroad/away, internships, public engagement, and undergraduate research, by reducing financial and perceptual barriers for all students.

1.4.2 Re-establish the Center for Teaching, Learning & Scholarship (CTLIS) to better support faculty in adopting student-centered learning models that help students connect experiences inside and outside the classroom.

1.4.3 Align faculty incentives and development to support experiential learning and student success.

1.4.4 Strengthen a campus-wide culture of public engagement that expands student success initiatives and career readiness and faculty innovation in teaching, scholarship, and creative work.

1.4.5 Develop and deepen reciprocal relationships with external partners in Georgetown/Central Texas to create student opportunities for curricular, co-curricular, and post-graduate collaborations.

1.5 Align Enrollment Strategy with Southwestern's Distinctive Value Proposition

Description

Coordinate recruitment, marketing, and partnerships to highlight Southwestern's distinctive academic and co-curricular experience and expand prospective student pipelines.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 1.5:

1.5.1 Optimize the Southwestern website and printed and digital recruitment media to ensure that communications are aligned with institutional priorities.

1.5.2 Strengthen enrollment strategies that increase selectivity and improve financial sustainability.

1.5.3 Increase national visibility and reputation by developing a media strategy to promote SU thought leaders, faculty-student scholarship, and program achievements aligned with Southwestern's distinctive identity.

1.5.4 Leverage alumni networks as a strategic asset for recruiting, mentoring, and creating post-graduate opportunities for students.

PRIORITY 2

Ensure Every Student Thrives

Core intent: Create a coordinated ecosystem of advising, engagement, inclusion, and belonging that supports student persistence, achievement, and equitable outcomes.

Core Question: Are students thriving once they enroll at Southwestern?

2.1 Transform Current Student Advising Model into a Success Coaching Model

Description

Redesign advising to provide proactive, coordinated, and relationship-centered support to students that integrates guidance on academic planning, student engagement, and professional pathways.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 2.1:

2.1.1 Implement a coordinated success-coaching model framed by the Pirate Plan that aligns academic advising, student support, and professional guidance across the student lifecycle

2.1.2 Strengthen use of data, technology, and training to enable proactive, collaborative, and personalized student support and effective interventions.

2.2 Strengthen Academic Pathways to Improve Progression and Graduation Outcomes

Description

Improve the structure and delivery of academic programming so students can navigate their curricular and co-curricular pathways efficiently and successfully.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 2.2:

2.2.1 Improve the course scheduling grid to create better protected time for co-curricular involvement, particularly for athletes and heavily scheduled students.

2.2.2 Strengthen structured academic pathways and progression systems to ensure all students can efficiently access required coursework and complete their degrees on time.

2.3 Foster a Vibrant and Engaged Student Community to Strengthen Belonging

Description

Expand opportunities for meaningful social connections and a place-based sense of belonging through co-curricular programming, student-centered spaces, and shared experiences.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 2.3:

- 2.3.1 Transform the McCombs Campus Center into a flexible, student-focused hub with an enhanced Student Engagement Center.
- 2.3.2 Continue to expand student-designed and student-centered spaces across campus to support both scheduled student-designed programming and spontaneous social interaction.
- 2.3.3 Increase on-campus game-day and other athletics fan experiences to build campus spirit and community.
- 2.3.4 Increase frequency of and unique participants in Pirate Adventure program offerings to support student engagement and belonging and to demonstrate the value of the Austin/Central Texas location to the Southwestern Experience.

2.4 Advance Inclusive Excellence to Promote Student Outcomes

Description

Strengthen programs and practices that promote inclusion, reduce equity gaps, and prepare Southwestern community members to engage constructively across differences.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 2.4:

- 2.4.1 Use data-informed approaches to evaluate and strengthen pilot initiatives that support student success, inclusion, and belonging, including transitioning successful donor- and grant-funded programs into the operating budget.
- 2.4.2 Strengthen programs that expand access, support student transition, and improve outcomes for all students, especially first-generation students.
- 2.4.3 Develop and implement more cross-unit programming and practices that establish clear expectations for respectful engagement across differences and strengthen community member accountability.
- 2.4.4 Develop and implement a comprehensive Spiritual Life plan that affirms Southwestern's identity as a United Methodist-related institution with a pluralist model of interfaith collaboration and support focused on student spiritual growth, community building, and social justice.

PRIORITY 3

Build Institutional Strength and Sustainability

Core intent: Strengthen the financial, operational, and organizational foundations necessary to sustain Southwestern's mission and long-term growth.

Core Question: Is Southwestern becoming financially stronger?

3.1 Modernize Campus Facilities to Support Learning and Engagement

Description

Invest strategically in facilities and infrastructure that support teaching, learning, student engagement, and community partnerships.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 3.1:

- 3.1.1 Renovate the School of Fine Arts Building as part of a comprehensive reimagination and reinvigoration of the School of Fine Arts.
- 3.1.2 Ensure the development of SU 560 strengthens the Southwestern Experience by providing walkable amenities, spaces for community social interaction, and opportunities for student learning and partnerships.
- 3.1.3 Improve athletics facilities and infrastructure to support recruiting, training, competition, and student engagement.
- 3.1.4 Develop and implement a coordinated, long-term approach to maintaining and upgrading academic and instructional infrastructure.

3.2 Strengthen Financial Stewardship to Ensure Long-Term Institutional Sustainability

Description

Implement disciplined and transparent financial planning and resource allocation practices that align institutional resources with strategic priorities.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 3.2:

- 3.2.1 Strengthen financial planning, budgeting, and reporting processes to improve transparency and accountability.
- 3.2.2 Transform procurement into a strategic sourcing and cost-containment function with measurable savings targets.
- 3.2.3 Ensure that wages and compensation for faculty and staff take precedence in budgeting processes and outcomes and are aligned with institutional priorities.

3.3 Increase Institutional Capacity and Partnerships by Expanding and Diversifying Financial Resources

Description

Advance a comprehensive fundraising and engagement strategy that increases non-tuition revenue and stakeholder engagement through internal and external philanthropic investments and auxiliary enterprises.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 3.3:

- 3.3.1 Create a fundraising strategy aligned with the priorities and tactics articulated in the Tactical Plan.
- 3.3.2 Create a grant-seeking strategy aligned with the priorities and tactics articulated in the Tactical Plan.
- 3.3.3 Establish giving requirements for Board of Trustees members for recurring Annual Fund gifts and at least one major gift.
- 3.3.4. Leverage Southwestern’s assets to expand auxiliary enterprises that optimize year-round usage of facilities to diversify revenue streams, increase external stakeholder engagement, and strengthen brand visibility.

3.4 Strategically Expand Engagement with Alumni and Parents to Sustain Initiatives

Description

Advance a coordinated strategy to increase alumni and parent engagement in support of Southwestern’s future.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 3.4:

- 3.4.1 Enhance communication and engagement strategies to strengthen relationships with parents and families of students.
- 3.4.2 Expand opportunities for family and alumni involvement in supporting institutional priorities.

3.5 Modernize Data and Technology Systems to Enable Strategic Decision-Making

Description

Develop integrated analytics and digital systems that support data-informed decision-making, operational efficiency, and student success.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 3.5:

- 3.5.1 Develop systematic approaches to data-informed decision-making across the University that focus on student success, engagement, and belonging.
- 3.5.2 Create reliable, secure, and integrated technology systems that support teaching, learning, and operations.

3.6 Strengthen Workforce Development to Support a Thriving Community

Description

Invest in faculty and staff development, compensation, and organizational practices that attract and retain talented employees committed to Southwestern’s mission.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 3.6:

3.6.1 Strengthen staff and faculty recruitment, development, and retention strategies to build an engaged and mission-aligned workforce capable of sustaining institutional change and growth.

3.6.2 Revitalize the structure of shared governance and open, transparent cross-unit communication and information exchange within and among trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students to break down structural silos within the institution.

3.7 Develop and Maintain Safe, Sustainable, and Mission-Aligned Campus Operations

Description

Ensure that campus infrastructure and operations remain safe, accessible, environmentally responsible, and aligned with institutional values.

Recommended Actions Supporting Tactic 3.7:

3.7.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive system for managing deferred maintenance and long-term infrastructure costs.

3.7.2 Develop and implement a coordinated records management system governing physical and digital artifacts and records to support institutional accountability, compliance, and historical preservation.

3.7.3 Advance energy efficiency and sustainability practices to reduce costs and reinforce Southwestern's environmental commitments.

3.7.4 Ensure full accessibility across all campus facilities in alignment with ADA standards.

3.7.5 Strengthen institutional capacity for risk-management and regulatory compliance.

3.7.6 Develop and implement a comprehensive campus safety plan addressing both physical and virtual security concerns in an open campus environment.

3.7.7 Strengthen campus safety resources and personnel to support community safety and well-being.