



THE STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR LYNN UNIVERSITY

Boca Raton, Florida
2005

Where there is no vision, the people perish.
Book of Proverbs

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Langston Hughes

It is not the strongest species that survive,
nor the most intelligent,
but the ones most responsive to change.
Charles Darwin

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PREFACE

In January 2005, Kevin Ross, the chief operating officer of Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida, asked education planner George Keller of Baltimore, Maryland, if he would help the University create a strategic plan for Lynn. He and his father, Dr. Donald Ross, Lynn's president, had come to think that the 43-year-old institution, which began as a two-year women's college in 1962 called Marymount College, accessible only by a dirt path from the main road, had grown to be a lovely, small university that needs a purposeful action plan for Lynn's next decades.

Keller accepted the assignment, and for the next four months conducted interviews; studied data, finances, and the facilities; and met regularly with a 17-person strategic planning committee composed of faculty, key executives, and deans. This plan is the result.

LYNN UNIVERSITY IN 2005

The rapid growth of Lynn University is one of the most remarkable private college achievements of contemporary American higher education. Started in the early 1960s, when Boca Raton still contained bean farms, strawberry fields, and orchards, the institution, which was renamed Lynn University in 1991, is today a strikingly attractive campus in what is now an exceptionally affluent community. More striking, the college, originally named Marymount College and later the College of Boca Raton, was only a two-year college from 1962 to 1986; so Lynn has been a four-year mini-university for just 20 years. Yet today Lynn University has a growing enrollment of nearly 1,950 undergraduates and 420 graduate students from 44 states and 94 foreign countries, and is comprised of five colleges, a school of aeronautics, and a conservatory of music.

The conservatory is one of the finest in the South. Lynn's athletic teams have won an astonishing 18 national championships. The 123-acre campus is now a work of semi-tropical beauty. Lynn's Institute for Achievement and Learning is a nationally recognized center for young people with learning differences. The new library is an architectural gem. The faculty is unusually devoted to teaching and nurturing the students. The honors program is growing in size and concentration. Lynn University is showing promise of becoming one of the finer small universities in the Southeast.

But Lynn has three issues it must deal with: its growth, newness, and succession.

The rapid growth of Lynn in the past two decades has brought acute shortages in residence halls, faculty offices, an adequate student center, sports fields and facilities, and a modern business school. Lynn also needs a performing and fine arts center and some faculty housing.

Because of the university's newness, its endowment is small. Therefore, Lynn has limited funds for faculty salaries and student scholarships, and is reliant on fees and tuition to cover institutional needs. Newness has meant that Lynn has yet to gain adequate recognition in the higher education marketplace, to weave productive collaboration among its several colleges, and to create a clear academic plan for its future. The proper size of Lynn University's future undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education enrollment is as yet undetermined.

The succession issue stems from the fact that Lynn is largely the product of the visionary, entrepreneurial, and indefatigable efforts of its founder, Dr. Donald Ross, who is retiring in 2006. Dr. Ross raised most of the monies himself, hired staff, and selected the array of academic programs. Lynn must now reconfigure itself and redistribute responsibilities for life after President Donald Ross. Minimally, this requires new roles for the academic vice president and each of the deans and the creation of a vigorous, enterprising office of resource development to continue raising money.

Lynn is clearly at a tipping point in its short history. The decision to craft a strategic action plan to guide the University's next steps and future growth seems an evident necessity.

PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In addition to attempting to respond creatively to Lynn's three major issues, this strategic plan is mindful of eight important strategic principles.

1. A college should build on its existing strengths and trim its questionable elements. It should capitalize on its comparative advantages.
2. A school should honor its traditions and culture and seek to move forward with those in mind.
3. A university must innovate continually to take advantage of the changing demographic, technological, intellectual, and economic developments in society.
4. Planning should be cognizant of the competition of nearby and regional colleges, especially their programs and pricing.
5. A private university should move forward in ways that are attractive to its alumni and to potential donors.
6. Strategy formulation should include wide consultation and idea solicitation, especially from key faculty, staff, and trustees.
7. The strategy should seek to provide a university with a distinctive niche among America's 3,900 colleges, a special set of reasons to pay for study at its campus instead of others.
8. A strategy should be permeated by an alluring vision of what the university hopes to become, and can be, in the not-too distant future.

A VISION FOR LYNN UNIVERSITY

Lynn's vision is to be recognized as one of the most innovative, international, and individualized small universities in America.

Lynn University will capitalize on its youth, location, and close student and faculty bonds to become a forerunner institution, a different kind of learning center, an independent innovative 21st - century university that is unusually devoted to preparing young persons for America's and the world's future.

To do so, Lynn will:

1. Remain relatively small, with approximately 2,400 undergraduate and 600 graduate students, and 500 or more adults annually in continuing education courses and institutes. A multi-faceted, coeducational, primarily residential university with a small-college atmosphere.
2. Admit an unusually wide array of diverse students, from those with learning differences to the gifted, from many countries of the world and states in the Union.
3. Be grounded in the liberal arts but contain a slightly different collection of colleges oriented toward emerging professional opportunities, each of which features superior teaching, applied learning, and international focus and experiences.
4. Contain a hallmark student development program that discerns each student's strengths, shortcomings, and special needs, and works to develop his or her full capabilities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To fulfill this vision of Lynn University as a different kind of 21st-century university--small, international, futuristic, and energetically student development-oriented--serving a broader assembly of students with an uncommon portfolio of professional college programs, the University needs to make strategic changes in five domains.

1. Lynn will recast, partially restructure, and intensify the focus of its academic offerings.
2. The University will further improve the quality, geographical origins, and financial aid of its students, enlarge its graduate and continuing education enrollments, and enhance the accommodations and services for undergraduates especially.
3. The institution will continue to improve the salaries, governance opportunities, workloads, teaching skills, and office and classroom facilities of the faculty.
4. Lynn will complete the construction of its campus and provide for better technological and scientific equipment.
5. The University will establish a new culture of widespread fund-raising and grant solicitation.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIES

Priority One: Lynn will recast, partially restructure, and intensify the focus of its academic offerings.

1. Each of the colleges should refine its course offerings and develop a special strength or two. Each should have a master's degree program.
2. Ways to grow and develop the honors program should be explored.
3. The School of Aeronautics should develop novel programs resulting in increased enrollment, and a competitive niche among aviation colleges.
4. The Ross College of Education should redesign itself with regionally innovative and excellent programs.
5. Lynn should become known as one of America's leading colleges to study learning differences.
6. The number of undergraduate degree titles should be reduced from seven to three (B.A., B.S., and B.M.).
7. The required core curriculum should be reconstructed to include instruction in core competencies -- writing, reading, oral expression, computer literacy, statistics, and the fundamentals of science. To accompany the instruction in core competencies, a course in the best works of literature and philosophy and another in the classic ideas of politics and economics should be devised.
8. The colleges of Arts and Sciences and of Business should strengthen the offerings in Asian studies. Mandarin should be added as a language.
9. A task force should be appointed to reexamine the offerings in quantitative instruction with an eye toward modernizing the content to better fit the needs of Lynn's students.
10. Lynn should consider lengthening its courses to 75 minutes. The total number of courses offered at Lynn should be reduced by 15 to 20 percent.

11. Alternative academic terms should be explored.
12. The College of Arts and Sciences should explore a reorganization of its academic offerings.
13. Lynn should add programs abroad in Latin America and Asia to its program in Ireland--for immersion in their respective languages and cultures.
14. The University should increase its programs in continuing education with more non-credit courses, special short institutes, on-line courses, and travels with academic elements.

Priority Two: The University will further improve the quality, geographical origins, and financial aid of its students, enlarge its graduate and continuing education enrollments, and enhance the accommodations and services for undergraduates especially.

1. The University should continue to elevate the entering credentials of all students. The admissions office should develop a recruiting plan, with a clear strategy and priorities to enhance even greater geographic diversity while maintaining its excellent percentage of international students.
2. To maintain its tradition of athletic excellence, Lynn should continue its recruitment of superior student athletes.
3. As soon as financially possible, the numerous extra student fees should be reduced, and Lynn's tuition price should become more competitive.
4. The program of financial aid should be enlarged, with a slightly higher discount rate, many more endowed scholarships, and an improved loan program. Presidential Scholarships and Dean's Scholarships should be increased in numbers and amounts awarded.
5. A major effort should be undertaken to improve student life, retention, and services. A new vice president for student development should be appointed.
6. Lynn should develop a comprehensive enrollment management plan.

7. All entering students should undergo an innovative personalized profile to discover their strengths, weaknesses, and special qualities, academic and personal. This information will be utilized to enhance the students' university experience.
8. As soon as it is financially feasible, Lynn should build a student center and additional residence halls, including an attractive residence hall for upper-class students only.
9. Selected upper-class students should be used as mentors and faculty assistants.
10. The University should intensify its connections with its ex-students or alumni, involving them as helpers. Reunions for graduates and affinity groups should become regular, special occasions.
11. Ways should be found to benefit from the many international students on campus.
12. Student and faculty travel abroad should continue to be widespread. A program for all students to learn about and see more of the United States might be created.
13. Student services should be made available on-line.
14. Lynn's marketing and admissions departments should collaborate to develop a comprehensive communications plan to assist in recruiting undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education enrollees.

Priority Three: The institution will improve the salaries, governance opportunities, workloads, teaching skills, and office and classroom facilities of the faculty.

1. Compensation packages and employee benefits for faculty and staff should continue to be improved as the University's finances allow. Full-time faculty should receive multi-year contracts after a reasonable trial period.
2. The teaching workload should eventually be reduced from eight courses a year to seven.

3. Lynn should provide grants for full-time faculty to undertake scholarly work in the summer, and should provide assistance in applying for grants. All faculty should be encouraged to engage in scholarly activities.
4. The institution should create a first-rate teaching workshop to (a) improve instructional skills and (b) coach faculty in the creative use of modern technology.
5. Lynn should encourage faculty participation in academic policy deliberations and budget recommendations.
6. The University should consider the construction of faculty and staff apartments on campus.
7. Lynn should seek to make its faculty more diverse and international.

Priority Four: Lynn will complete the construction of its campus and provide for better technological and scientific equipment.

1. For the students, Lynn should build new residence halls as soon as feasible, as well as a multi-purpose student center.
2. For the faculty, the University should construct an academic building with additional faculty offices and state-of-the-art classrooms.
3. The science laboratories should be modernized with the latest equipment.
4. Lynn should erect a new business school building.
5. The Eugene M. and Christine E. Lynn College of International Communication should continue to keep abreast of the latest communications equipment, and seek to install it as soon as finances allow.
6. The University should be alert to possible purchases of additional property nearby.
7. When funding becomes available, Lynn should construct a performing and fine arts center.

Priority Five: The University will establish a new culture of widespread fund-raising and grant solicitation.

1. Every dean and a significant number of professors and directors should become active in gaining new resources.
2. Lynn should continue to build a professional and energetic development office.
3. The University should create one of the region's most active and largest programs of gift planning.
4. Lynn should launch a capital funds campaign soon of approximately \$100 million to \$150 million, focusing on the following areas of need:
 - buildings, science laboratories, classrooms, etc.;
 - endowed professorships;
 - endowments for all academic units;
 - student scholarships;
 - international travel programs; and
 - athletic facilities and programs.
5. Endowed positions should be sought for the coaches of baseball, basketball, golf, soccer, softball, tennis, and volleyball.
6. The board of trustees should play a leading and active role in assisting the University in its quest for greater financial strength. Lynn's board of overseers and each college's council of advisors should receive increased attention and more defined responsibilities.
7. The University should seek funding for additional endowed famous speakers programs, including international luminaries.
8. The University's endowment should be invested expertly for maximum growth, within the bounds of prudence.
9. Lynn should continue improving its office of marketing and communication to help the public learn about the University's special attributes and achievements, and its worthiness for investment.

CONCLUSION

Lynn University has made rapid and amazing progress in its short life, but it is at an historic and pivotal point. How can this young and underfinanced institution continue to rise as one of America's vital new contributors to the intellectual, artistic, and economic eminence of the nation?

This strategic plan suggests that Lynn can do so by designing itself to be a new, distinctive, and different kind of modern house of higher education, one that is boldly oriented to the global society of the future and that breaks out of the collegiate assumptions of yesteryear. Lynn has already been moving in that direction. The students are remarkably diverse, geographically and intellectually. The faculty are devoted to great teaching and student growth, and not preoccupied with research projects; and they work without tenure. The professional colleges are distinct and innovative, preparing learners for the new worlds of international and visual communication, increasing travel, expanding air transport, international business and finance, music and performing arts, and unfamiliar politics, cultures, religions, literary expressions, and social behaviors.

Now Lynn must move forward more intentionally. Hence, this strategic action plan. To deliver its initiatives, however, requires a major and persistent act of will by the faculty, trustees, alumni, and the president, vice presidents, deans, coaches, and staff. And by interested friends of venturesome higher learning. If the entire Lynn University family works to implement this strategy, Lynn could emerge as a noted and different force in America's galaxy of higher education.