

Lesley University

Strategic Plan 2012–2016



Introduction

Lesley University is a dynamic institution with a compelling mission, high-quality academic programs, engaging pedagogy, a caring community culture, and a tradition of innovation. Founded in 1909, Lesley prepares thousands of women and men for careers that strengthen the lives of individuals, families, communities, and organizations. The university offers a wide range of degree programs distinguished by their social relevance, academic rigor, intellectual breadth, and commitment to providing graduates with the theoretical foundation and practical skills necessary to succeed in professions that contribute to the public good.

Lesley is dedicated to scholarship grounded in practice and learning rooted in experience. That dedication is reflected in the accomplishments of our outstanding alumni, award-winning faculty, talented staff, and engaged students. Together with our Board of Trustees and 80,000 alumni across the globe, we are continuing our 103-year legacy and building a stronger, more diverse institution. The goals set forth in this strategic plan build upon the strengths of our past and guide our future.



Strategic Goals 2012-2016

Our mission, aspirations, and the current context of American higher education inform our long-term vision as well as our priorities for the next four years. Achieving these six strategic goals will require us to embrace the spirit of innovation and imagination that has guided Lesley throughout its history.

Goal 1: Focus on Quality and Value

Enhance our reputation for educational excellence and student achievement by providing outstanding academic programs, inspiring experiential learning opportunities, and engaging co-curricular programs and activities. Continue to add depth to academic programs and expand the repertoire of curricular offerings, especially those that employ emerging technologies, utilize innovative delivery models, and have clear career paths.

Goal 2: Increase Enrollment and Strengthen Diversity

Strive for steady enrollment growth through our degree programs, innovative collaborations with transfer institutions, and international partnerships while intentionally increasing the cultural and economic diversity of the student body, and creating a welcoming campus environment for residential, commuter, distant, and online students.

Goal 3: Support Student Success

Maintain a persistent focus on student success. Coordinate the necessary resources for all students to thrive, leading to exemplary retention and graduation rates for each undergraduate and graduate degree program, while intentionally deepening the learning outcomes and engagement of students that lead to meaningful employment and lifelong learning.



Goal 4: Advance Research, Scholarship, and Professional Development

Increase support for faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity that enhances faculty contributions to their disciplines and classrooms, enriches student learning, and contributes to the common good. Expand professional development opportunities for all staff for professional growth and career advancement benefiting our staff members and the students and alumni they serve.

Goal 5: Develop a Nexus for the Arts in Cambridge

Extend the power of the arts throughout the university, PreK-12 education, and the community by building the Lesley University arts center which will house AIB, provide new synergies for arts programming across the university, and make Porter Square a hub of artistic creativity.

Goal 6: Reach Beyond our Borders

Become a more global university. Expand our efforts to increase enrollment of international students, develop new partnerships with international institutions, and create international scholarly exchanges for faculty and staff. Infuse international content and perspectives in the curriculum, and expand the opportunities for students to complete semesters, internships, research projects, and service learning opportunities in other countries.

Our Aspirations

We are a comprehensive university with students, faculty, staff, and alumni at the core of our success. Our bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs integrate theory and practice and link the classroom and the community. We transform the lives of students by integrating rigorous academics with practical and professional experiences, preparing a diverse community of learners for creative, responsible, and effective leadership within a global society.

We must play a significant role in making quality higher education accessible to every citizen and resident in the nation, and must embed a commitment to global citizenry and social responsibility in the knowledge and skills we teach. We aspire to build on the strength of our diverse portfolio of programs and to continue our legacy of leadership in education, human services, and the arts.

We seek to reflect the growing diversity of the country in our students, employees, curriculum, and campus culture, and promote the understanding, appreciation, and celebration of cultural differences. In this regard, our attention will be focused on marginalized and underserved individuals, including those who have historically been unable to access quality education.

Ours is a community that values the free exchange of ideas. We believe that the lasting value of a Lesley University education is directly related to the strong sense of affiliation felt by students, faculty, staff, and alumni for their university. We are devoted to student engagement and learning. We value communication, alternative perspectives, meaningful shared governance, and collegial leadership at all levels of the university.

We aspire to harness the power of technology and the creativity of our faculty, students, and staff to create educational programs that produce agents of change and leaders in the campaign for a more just, humane, and sustainable world. We seek to use educational technologies to reach wider audiences, enhance the learning experience, exploit electronic information resources, and assist the university in achieving its enrollment goals.

These aspirations permeate the university through the schools, offices, and programs that support the students and faculty. We have accomplished much yet we are poised to accomplish more.



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The Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University (AIB)

Enrolling 500 undergraduate students and 110 graduate students in BFA and MFA programs, AIB is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. Its mission is to educate tomorrow's artists and designers and present an array of programs for public engagement. AIB has built its reputation on the personal attention and professional curriculum that support the aspirations of each student and the development of each student's imagination, skills, and professional potential through close relationships with a faculty devoted to the arts, teaching, and their professional practice. AIB provides meaningful connections between majors and their professional fields through engaging internships for each student, superior equipment, and cutting-edge technology.

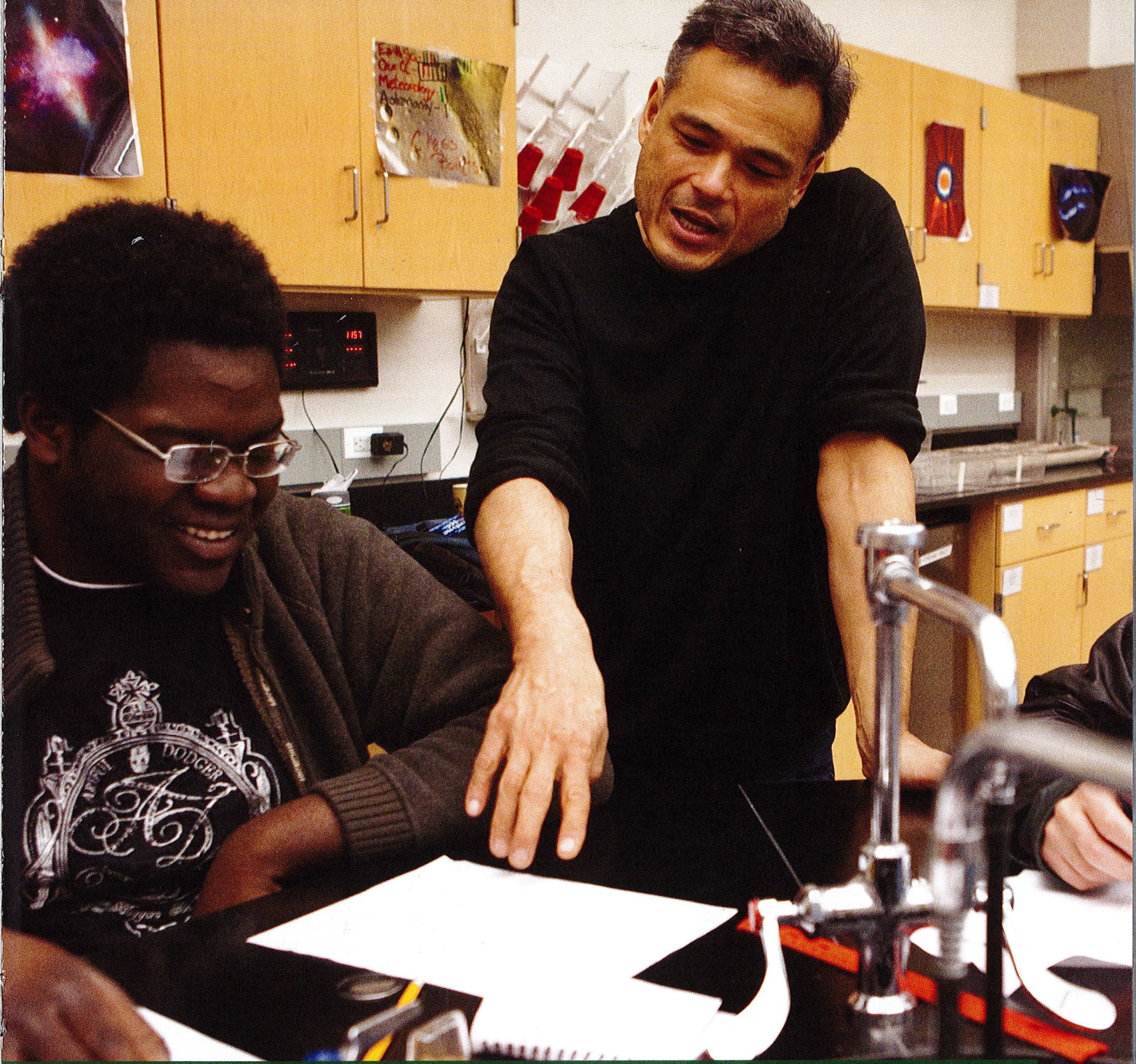
Currently located in Boston's Kenmore Square, AIB will increase undergraduate enrollment from 500 to 600 students and move to the new arts center in Cambridge's Porter Square in the next few years. The design, incorporating historical and new structures, is in place and plans for construction are moving forward. The center will become a nexus of creative energy by providing a new home for AIB, uniting the university through the arts, and enabling us to deepen our longstanding tradition of involving the community in events and activities at Lesley. We will solidify our role in the creative economy—which has emerged as a driving force in the 21st century—and our graduates will have a broad impact as they pursue careers in animation, design, entertainment, illustration, photography, museums, community arts organizations, art education, and other arts-related professions.

College of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies (LA&PS)

The undergraduate college supports twenty-one liberal arts and professional studies majors as well as the Lesley Center for the Adult Learner (LCAL). With enrollments of 1,000 traditional-age students and 350 adult students, the college engages students within a dynamic liberal arts learning community founded upon active citizenship, experiential learning, and the integration of theory and practice. All undergraduate students, including AIB students, complete the general education component of their educational experiences in the college. It is here that students practice their effective communication, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and scientific skills. Here, they learn to think broadly across multiple disciplines, while specializing in their major fields of study. Committed teacher-scholars are integral to the college's success as they guide students through content instruction, academic advising, experiential learning, internships, study abroad, leadership opportunities, and programmatic linkages to graduate programs.

The Lesley Center for the Adult Learner (LCAL) is a University gateway for adults who want to earn a bachelor's degree through an individualized degree plan. Such a degree takes into account previous college course work and applies prior, college-level work experience toward degree completion. LCAL operates as an integral component of Lesley's undergraduate college, but draws upon the resources of the entire University to enable adult learners to enroll in and complete meaningful bachelor's degree programs.

Over the next four years the College of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies will create more international opportunities for our students, continue to provide diverse and challenging internships in each major, enroll more students from urban school districts, and focus on first-year academic experiences that prepare our students for academic success and scholarship. We will also continue to develop and market the opportunity for undergraduates to complete a bachelor's degree program in three years. The undergraduate college will increase traditional undergraduate enrollment from 1,000 to 1,400 students and adult student enrollment from 350 to 700 students. LCAL will fully develop the individualized degree program for all adult students. Adult undergraduates will be able to access curriculum and learning opportunities from all four schools, community-based internships, independent study, prior learning assessment, and online courses from Lesley and other regionally accredited institutions.



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Threshold graduates confidently step out into the world seeking and finding careers that would not have been imagined without their Threshold experience.

The Threshold Program

The Threshold Program is a non-degree, campus-based program for motivated young adults with diverse cognitive learning challenges. For 30 years, it has prepared students to become independent adults leading full and active lives. Threshold annually enrolls approximately 60 students who discover talents, cultivate strengths, confront challenges, and develop life skills. Threshold graduates confidently step out into the world seeking and finding careers that would not have been imagined without their Threshold experience.

The goals for the Threshold program in the coming years are clear. We will hold enrollment steady; review and enhance Threshold's academic and career offerings, and explore the feasibility of new academic components within the Transition and Bridge year experiences for our students; develop the Threshold Alumni Center which will support the graduates of the Threshold program in areas of employment, education, social networking, and independent living; enhance employment support for Threshold graduates who must have meaningful employment to realize the program's goal of independence; develop, fund, and implement plans to renovate Threshold's two residence halls, student life areas and office spaces; and explore ways to promote Threshold as a national model by encouraging other higher education institutions to develop similar programs to serve this population for whom there remains insufficient educational opportunity.

The Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences (GSASS)

Offering creative and integrative programs for those seeking professional growth in diverse areas of human development, GSASS enrolls approximately 1,250 students per semester, including over 300 students in programs in Israel. Dedicated to the principle that the role of higher education is to develop and nurture a creative, civil, and life-sustaining society, faculty members in GSASS practice transformative teaching and learning supported by interdisciplinary thinking. The field of Expressive Therapies was created at Lesley and the nation's first Expressive Therapies doctoral degrees were conferred at the university in 2006. Counseling Psychology, with its various licensure and non-licensure programs, emphasizes the application of theory to practice. The MFA in Creative Writing is a short-term residency program with an outstanding national reputation. The Intercultural Relations program and Self-Designed Master's Degree program (SDMD) complete the current GSASS portfolio, offering opportunity for degree customization and professional growth.

GSASS's faculty and programs advance the health of whole persons and whole communities, address the healing of trauma, and utilize the arts to educate, examine our world, and envision future possibilities. The school is committed to strategically positioning itself by developing new programs, enriching existing programs, and maintaining enrollment at 1,250 students per semester following the planned phase-out of the programs in Israel. GSASS will explore the development of specialty tracks in several of its existing programs, including Counseling and Psychology and Intercultural Relations; will realign existing programs, selectively increasing their capacity; will pursue international partnerships; and will showcase faculty and program excellence.



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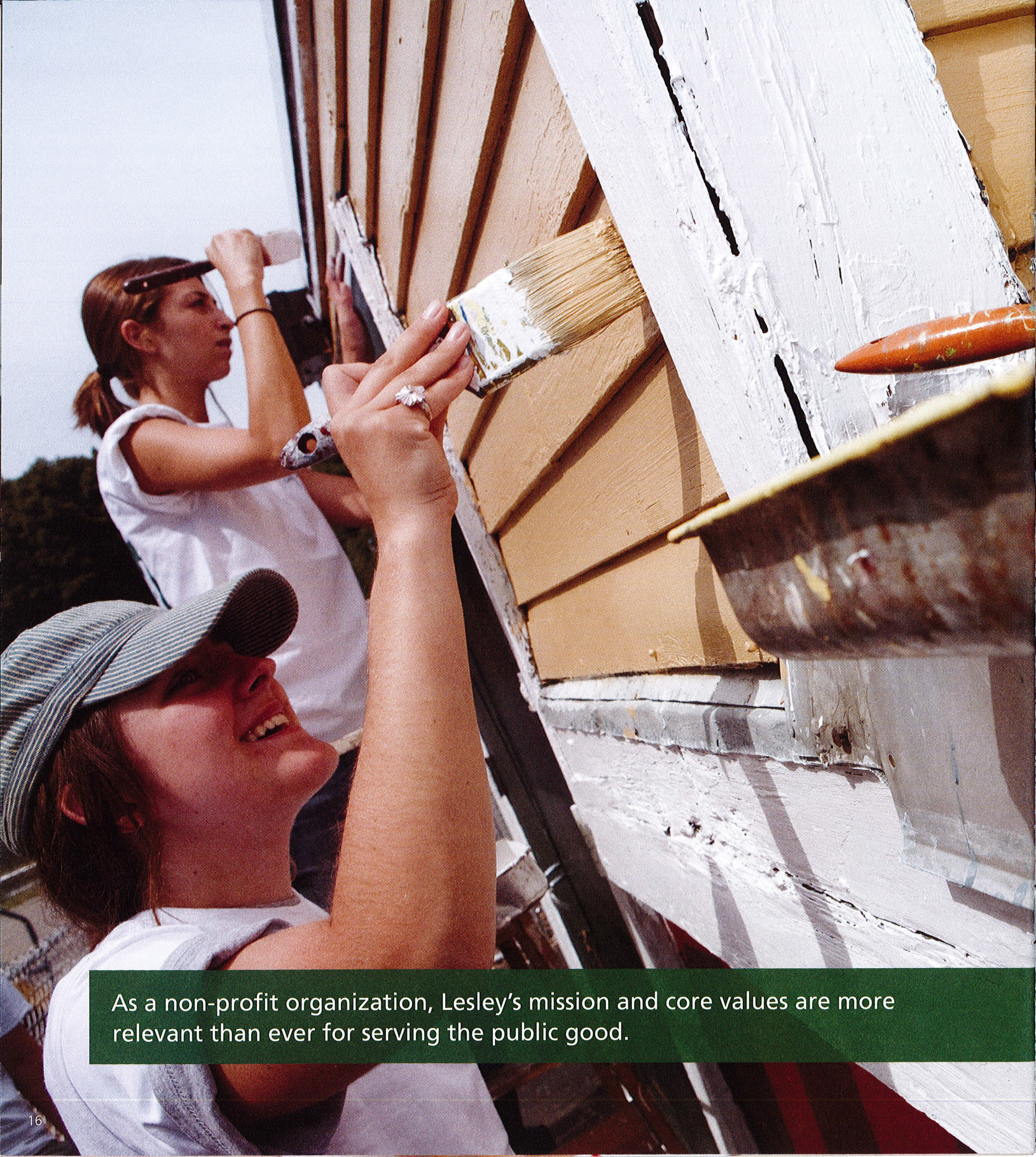


Both regionally and nationally, a Lesley education degree carries with it a stamp of excellence that places our graduates in advantageous positions for employment.

The Graduate School of Education (GSOE)

Enrolling nearly 2,800 students per semester, the Graduate School of Education offers advanced study in numerous fields that lead to initial and professional education licenses, master's degrees, certificates of advanced graduate study, and doctoral degrees. The Graduate School of Education has a reputation for developing teachers and leaders who are not only highly effective but also lifelong learners who continually refine their craft. GSOE's size allows for a diversity of program delivery models (regional cohorts, online programs, short-term residencies, on-campus courses) that extend our reach far beyond Cambridge. However, the development of small learning communities supported by attention to individual students is a priority for every GSOE course and program. Both regionally and nationally, a Lesley education degree carries with it a stamp of excellence that places our graduates in advantageous positions for employment. Highly-effective faculty teaching, scholarship, involvement in community schools, and partnerships with school systems are hallmarks of the Graduate School of Education.

GSOE will extend its national reach and reputation by developing and offering innovative programs that directly support the goal of improving PreK-12 student achievement in every classroom. Our innovation will be evident through: an effective teaching program that connects a deeper understanding of content directly to improved instruction and student outcomes; alternative clinical residencies and on-site collaborative urban internships; continued leadership in integrating the arts into education, particularly as many schools are cutting back the arts due to testing and budgetary constraints; educational technology programs that emphasize both current and emerging technologies for the classroom, enabling our students to become technology leaders in their schools through comprehensive knowledge of technological innovations; dual degree programs that offer initial licensure in two disciplines, such as Elementary Education and English as a Second Language, as ELL instruction becomes a growing need nationwide; individually designed programs that enable students to tailor an advanced level degree to their personal and professional goals; and an expanded repertoire of online programs that meet the diverse needs of our learners and deepen our commitment to teacher education across the country. As a result of these new innovations, GSOE will stabilize its enrollment and see modest growth from 2,800 to 3,100 students per semester.



As a non-profit organization, Lesley's mission and core values are more relevant than ever for serving the public good.

A Context for Planning

As we consider the key strategies related to academic programs, finances, facilities, personnel, technology and more, it is important to identify the context in which such strategies operate. Our four-year plan takes into account how our mission and core values interact with the current social, political, and economic conditions confronting us.

Through our students, our alumni, their families, and our connections with many communities, we are witnessing unprecedented gaps between rich and poor, the educated and the uneducated, those with healthcare and those without, and those with meaningful employment and those with limited or no employment. We must stay true to the university's mission to serve the public good, and this means a greater intentionality to meet the needs of a complex and increasingly uneven society in rapidly changing national and global environments.

As a non-profit organization, Lesley's mission and core values are more relevant than ever for serving the public good. We work with others through our political, economic, and educational systems to improve these conditions and we must remain engaged from both policy and practical perspectives. The higher education landscape has undergone fundamental shifts: globalization and connectivity in a world that is flatter, disruptive technology in the form of online learning, emerging for-profit competitors, and more government regulation. We see challenges and opportunities in the changing demographics of college-ready students,

increased competition for these students, and increasing costs for providing and acquiring education. Federal financial aid policies, PreK-12 student assessment policies, healthcare policies, and finance reform also dramatically influence whom and how we serve.

We continue to be sensitive to our financial context, including tuition rates, financial aid, and student loan debt. Affordability is an increasing concern for more students and their families. We must continue to constrain tuition increases and provide significant institutional aid in order to enroll an economically-diverse student body and make a college degree a genuine opportunity for any qualified student.

We must understand every aspect of the value proposition we offer current and prospective students. Lesley must be committed to realizing high retention and graduation rates for all programs, restraining student debt levels, and achieving high employment rates for our graduates and alumni. We must control costs and tuition rates, offer each student a quality learning experience, and support our graduates in gaining meaningful employment upon graduation.

Finally, in order to continue to be competitive in today's educational marketplace, we must sharpen the contemporary image and brand of Lesley University, both internally and externally. We must differentiate the quality of our programs; highlight the talents of our faculty, staff, and alumni; and demonstrate the dedication of the entire university community to the academic and experiential engagement of each student.

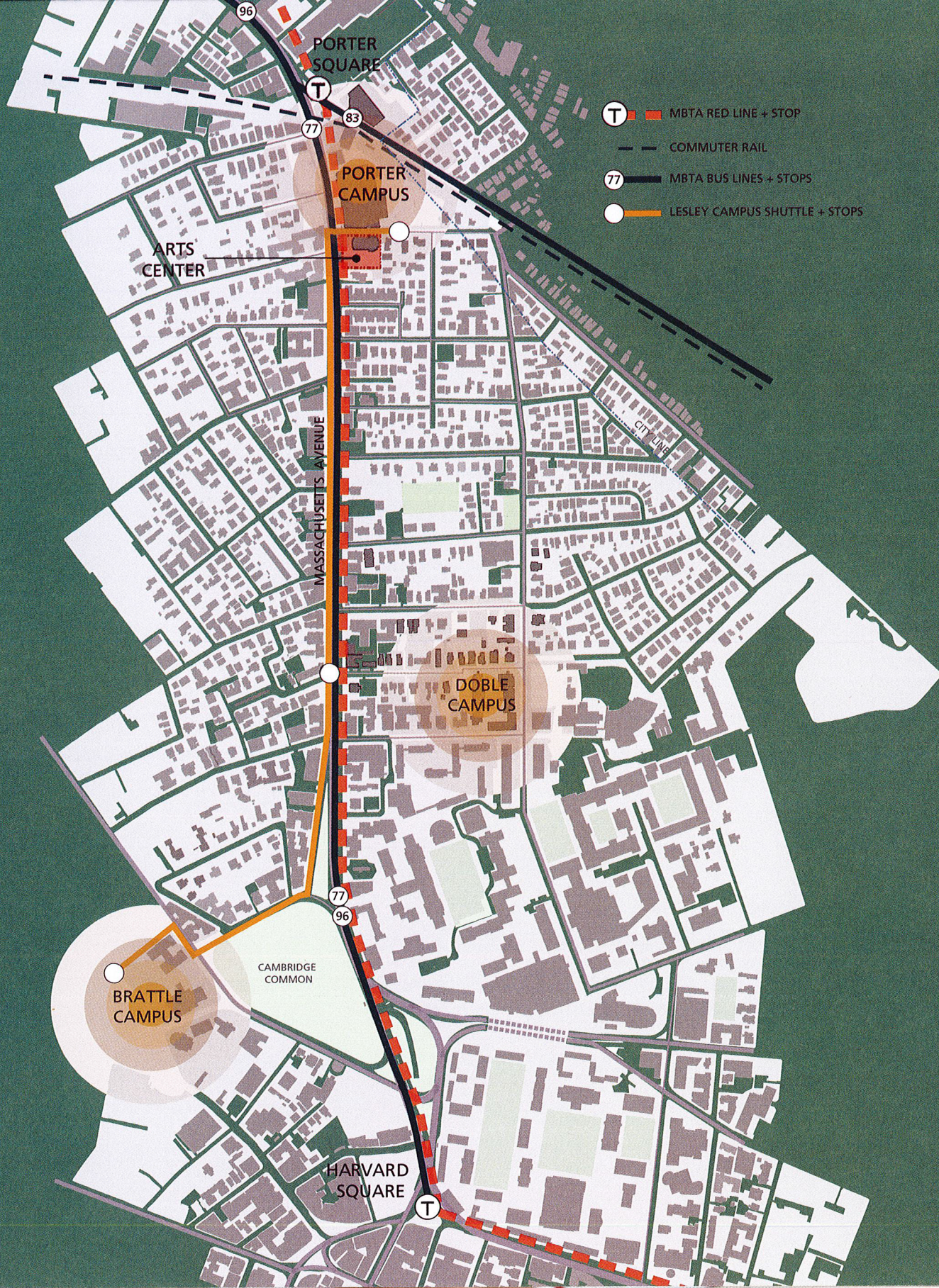


Conclusion

Achieving these goals will require coordinated efforts across the university. This plan builds upon our strong reputation for preparing teachers, mental health counselors, expressive therapists, and professional artists. We must seize opportunities for more internal collaborations and external partnerships that capitalize on the creativity and imagination of our faculty to enhance the learning experiences of our students. We must deepen our relationship with the 80,000 Lesley alumni across the country and globe so that we may learn from their experiences and continue to contribute to their learning and development.

A recurring thread in our strategic plan is growth—growth in our impact on our students and the communities we serve, growth in enrollment, and growth in the resources available to achieve the mission of Lesley University. Growth aligned with our mission will allow us to educate more students, conduct more research, push the boundaries and intersections of our fields in new and exciting ways, and bring our expertise to bear on an array of problems confronting families and communities. We are engaged in worthwhile work.

What we do matters.



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