
OPERATIONAL SUPPORTS

While Columbia College Chicago is a not-for-profit institution of higher education, it is both a place of learning and exploration and a workplace that operates pursuant to a business model. We will provide a respectful and supportive operational context that supports our students, faculty and staff, while advancing the interests of Columbia College Chicago and being faithful stewards of its legacy and future through sound business policies and structures. We want Columbia College Chicago to be a preferred employer, and to create a collaborative community atmosphere that welcomes diverse students, faculty and staff and allows them to thrive. We want to be good neighbors in the South Loop and greater Chicago, and manage our space and resources in a responsible and sustainable fashion.

ACTION STEPS: ADVANCING COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

- We will undertake to assess the strengths and weakness of our current operations, in light of the current size of our student body and distribution of faculty and staff, the mix and enrollment of our degree programs, with a view towards supporting the interdisciplinary work of the college, advancing the college's fiscal health and wellbeing goals, and supporting our investments in business practices that promote efficiency.
- We will invest in interdisciplinary engagement, including topic- and project-based collaboration opportunities for faculty, staff and students. We will create spaces for faculty and staff to appreciate and interrogate creative practices beyond their own disciplines.

ACTION STEPS: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Improved communication is essential to achieving Columbia College Chicago's student success, faculty and staff vitality, and engagement goals.

- **Student Communication:** With a current enrollment of nearly 7000, and a goal to grow enrollment to 8,500, students represent our largest campus constituency. Our students are at different points on their Columbia College Chicago journey and their individual needs and the wide range of their communication preferences present significant challenges to effective, just-in-time communication. We need to develop a unifying communication strategy across multiple channels and formats that is proactive, informed by the best practices of student-focused communication; this strategy will be designed to convey information that supports their needs, answers questions in a timely fashion, communicates our expectations, celebrates their successes, and connects them to our community.
 - We will create a centralized office of student communications that serves a leadership and coordinating role for student communications across the college. A primary responsibility of this office will be to enhance communications related to student academic progress and student health and wellbeing. This office will be staffed by individuals with expertise in student communication strategies and experience utilizing a broad array of communication channels that reach students who can be a resource to share best practices with the campus. Informing their work with student perspectives, and in close collaboration across the campus to determine needs, this office will take the lead in realizing the student communication goals that follow.
 - We will create and launch a student-to-alumni life-cycle communication plan. This plan will smoothly transition prospective students to on-campus communication protocols, coordinating amongst different offices. The plan should incorporate the best practices for communicating with

students, including prioritizing messaging and creating effective static information portals to allow students to find critical information easily when needed.

- We will assess the effectiveness of current communication channels and investigate and recommend investments in technology and expertise necessary to activate texting, social media, and other forms of communication across our campus.
- We will assess how to leverage the Engage platform to support key student success and communication goals, and recommend the necessary training and support (e.g., design consultants, additional staff) to use the platform at its full potential.
- We will develop communication resources to set criteria for centralized student communications to facilitate appropriate and effective communication across all college departments, and improve the “signal-to-noise ratio.”
- We will develop a communications plan for the diverse community of parents, family members and friends who support our students, recognizing the ways in which we can help them support student wellbeing and success.
- **Staff and Faculty Communication:** We will develop an overarching internal communication strategy that expands our communication channels to ensure we are effectively and efficiently reaching all constituents. We will develop staff- and faculty-specific communication plans that support inclusive engagement, professional development, and other goals. A goal of staff and faculty communication should be to foster inclusive engagement through broad dissemination of critical information and well-defined channels for collaborative feedback.
- **Communicating our Community Values:** We will develop an annual campus communication plan connecting the campus to the community and marking national and local topics such as Asian American Heritage, Indigenous Heritage, Latino Heritage, Black History, Women’s History, LGTBQ+ Culture, veterans’ awareness, disability awareness and other topics related to diversity, access, equity and inclusion, and promotes campus programming to the community.

ACTION STEPS: FISCAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

- We will build a sustainable financial model for the college, considering tuition and access, diversification of revenue, and funding for strategic investments. We will continue to preserve the College’s ability to access affordable capital by maintaining a solid credit rating via a strong balance sheet, prudent management of operations and sustainable cash flows.
 - We will continue to collaborate with the Board of Trustees to implement competitive tuition and discounting rates at the undergraduate and graduate levels benchmarked to the value of a Columbia College Chicago education and that, over time, generate the needed annual net income to balance and stabilize annual operating performance.
 - Academic, financial and student recruitment leadership will, working with schools and departments, develop and execute a strategy of enrollment growth that understands and accounts the costs of instruction of academic programs to ensure financially sustainable enrollment growth.
 - We will ensure the resources necessary to invest in the faculty and staff required to design, deliver and maintain high-quality, innovative academic programs, and to support our goal to be a preferred employer.
 - We will identify and launch and support new academic programs that have strong market appeal and economic viability that align with the College’s mission, with the expectation that such programs will be sunset if enrollment and revenue targets are not met.

- We will invest in the technology and spaces necessary to deliver and maintain high-quality, innovative academic programs, while advancing our sustainability goals.
- We will develop and implement best practice strategies to contain and, where possible, reduce the overhead costs associated with the administration of the college.
- We will collaborate with the Board of Trustees to significantly grow the College's endowment to provide greater operating funding for the College. We will support student access by championing a culture of campus giving by faculty, staff, alumni, and friends in support of scholarship funds and other student resources.

ACTION STEPS: PREFERRED WORKPLACE

We strive to be known as an employer of choice, offering our faculty and staff compensation that is competitive and supporting their professional development and health and wellbeing.

- We will clarify employment expectations, linking position descriptions to institutional mission goals and identify opportunities for advancement and development.
- We will embrace the positive impacts of the pandemic experience by instituting a flexible workplace strategy appropriate to our campus needs, in support of faculty and staff wellbeing, and advancing our sustainability goals by using our spaces efficiently and reducing our carbon footprint.
- We will implement an integrated campus-wide strategy to support health, wellness and well-being for frontline faculty and staff to reduce turnover and burnout.

ACTION STEPS: BUSINESS PRACTICES

Our business practices and operational context will support our faculty and staff, and advance our institutional goal to provide a curriculum that meets our and our students' expectations to empower them to author the culture of their time. Our business processes and tools must be people-centered: supportive and non-distracting, efficient and informative, user-friendly and sustainable.

- We will Invest in and execute the Business Affairs ERP Roadmap – which includes reengineering key business processes and upgrading their supporting enterprise technologies. These actions will lead to improvement via streamlining and automation of important processes in accounting, procurement, budgeting, and human resources.
- We will modernize our SIS (student information system - currently Jenzabar) to ensure the College's SIS – a core enterprise system – will support the institution's evolving needs relating to the data pertaining to student records, degrees and certifications, courses and the processing of student finances.
- We will continue to assess and update the ecosystem of advising tools and processes with the goal of improving the quality and caliber of student advising services.
- We will invest in appropriate Requirements Gathering, Process Design and Reengineering and Project Management resources (for example business analysts and project management tools) to ensure investments in new tools and processes effectively address key business challenges. Requirements management is fundamental in ensuring project/process goals are successfully met and meets the expectations of involved stakeholders over both the short and long terms.
- We will establish a governance process to conduct periodic reviews of academic and administrative policies to ensure consistency and the absence of contradictions, that gives agency to faculty and staff across the institution.

- We will invest in a digital transformation of our campus with enabling technology to optimize processes and operations to support our faculty and staff and the creative work of our campus, and to responsibly support our sustainability goals and reduce our carbon footprint.