



S.O.A.R. Analysis: Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results

December 2021

Lipscomb University’s current strengths, future opportunities, and shared aspirations underpin the new strategic planning process – Lipscomb Impact 360 – and provide a backdrop for where we are and where we can go. Our strengths are a foundation on which we can build, and the opportunities identified below are how we can leverage those strengths. Our aspirations show the scope of our ambitions, and our results share what we seek to achieve through our work together.

Strengths

Lipscomb enjoys a wealth of strengths that serve as a foundation for future achievements. Our Christian identity and strong academics are chief among these, along with our welcoming and engaging university community and the student-centered way we operate. Our Nashville home is also a great source of strength.

Christian Commitment

At Lipscomb we are Christ-centered and our faith is integral to our culture and community. We share a deep commitment to our Christian faith, and our mission reflects this shared identity. This faith orientation infuses our campus culture, our individual and collective purpose, and our commitment to service. Our faith also underpins our vocation-centered approach to education. We work with all students to fully prepare them for their calling. Our pride in our Christian identity also fosters a classroom environment where professors and students feel free to discuss matters of faith, thereby connecting students’ knowledge and skills with their calling and sense of purpose.

Strong Academics

Lipscomb offers a diverse range of high quality academic programs and extra-curricular activities. These strengths range across the arts and sciences and a wealth of professional programs. Our history of excellence in education is the foundation of our academic reputation, and our academic culture plays a key role in our success. Our faculty engage students in conversations about what matters most in our world and in their own faith.

A crucial aspect of our reputation for academic excellence is our ability to deliver on what we say we will do. We support our students across the university and at Lipscomb Academy; providing them with great instruction and mentoring, and supporting them in achieving the outcomes they seek. Lipscomb’s offerings have also

Strengths:

- Christian faith
- High quality academic programs
- Excellent faculty and staff
- Commitment to Christian hospitality
- Student-centered
- Strong engagement with the community
- Nashville location

shifted to meet the changing and growing needs of our students, and we pride ourselves on this agility as we purposefully prepare for the future.

Student-Centered

The student experience is at the heart of what we do. Our faculty/student ratio allows us to focus on small classes and to genuinely know our students. We value every student in a deep way, and this dedication to their development extends beyond the classroom to other aspects of their experiences at Lipscomb. We foster mentorship between faculty and students, and encourage rich student-to-student relationships that enhance the formal learning experience at the university. Lipscomb is committed to delivering a wealth of leadership opportunities for students and fostering active engagement in our community.

Our university attracts and retains high quality faculty and staff who care deeply about student success. Whether in the classroom, a laboratory, an office, or a residence hall, our faculty and staff are approachable, caring, and student-centered. This relational focus is a hallmark of the Lipscomb experience. We take mentorship seriously and care about the welfare and growth of each person in our university community. These intentional relationships make Lipscomb what it is: a community that values all its members.

Community Engagement

Both on and off campus, community engagement is a central tenet of our university culture. Our internal community of faculty, staff, and students establish and maintain close connections. But we also extend this beyond the campus by engaging alumni, partner organizations, and the communities we serve. We believe in partnerships that build mutually beneficial relationships with individuals and organizations alike.

Our locations play a key role in the life of the university, and we are committed to giving back to our neighborhoods as well. Nashville is our home and we consider our location one of our greatest strengths. The dynamism of Nashville, its people, and its culture uplift us as a university. The new Lipscomb University-Austin Center, located in Austin, Texas, is an equally vibrant locale and this new location represents one of our newest strengths.

Opportunities

Our strengths foster opportunities for growth, continual improvement, and success. The changing needs of our students and our communities create opportunities for us to adapt what we teach, how we teach, who we teach, and where this occurs. We can also expand the range of people we serve and include in the life of our university. To do so, we need to be as engaging and as affordable as possible—and we need to clearly convey priorities we hope to deepen. The myriad of opportunities are particularly attainable if we deepen our culture of service, expand our range of partnerships, and fully leverage our potential as a university.

Increase Flexibility

Our range of academic offerings, and the infrastructure that support them, afford us numerous opportunities for growth and increasing flexibility. Our university serves individuals from preschool, primary, and secondary school; to traditional-age undergraduate students; to adult professional and graduate students; to our robust lifelong-learning opportunities. For us to fully realize our vast potential to make a positive impact on each of these learners, we need to

align with current and expected student needs and interests. Given the complex challenges facing society, many such opportunities may lie at the intersection of disciplines within the university. As such, our students will benefit most if we consider both how our existing programs can serve them best, and how we can leverage opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration across the university.

Beyond the curricula we deliver, we can supply our students with a wider range of opportunities to apply their knowledge. In particular, more extensive experiential learning would meet student interests while furthering our commitment to deliver the foundational skills and abilities they will need for employment throughout their careers. In this way, we can ensure that employers see Lipscomb as the source for students with the skills they seek.

Other key opportunities for us lie in increasing the flexibility we extend to students as we deliver a Lipscomb education. We should elevate the use of technology throughout the learning process. Students want great flexibility in how, when, and where they learn. Considering different modalities of learning, such as online, hybrid, and ‘hyflex’ courses, will be vital going forward. Similarly, our students need exposure to cultures around the globe to prepare them for the 21st century workplace—and we should explore how best to provide these experiences. Moreover, we should continue to consider alternative ways of credentialing learning such as non-degree options, badges, and certificates so our students readily convey to employers the knowledge, skills, and experience they bring.

While we adapt to these emergent needs we must also continue to engage students with the fundamental questions confronting society. Our combination of liberal arts, the professions, and faith are central to our culture. Society is in dire need of solutions to myriad problems, and our competitive advantages include the ways we combine faith and learning to prepare students for leadership and for life success.

Opportunities:

- Continue to align with changing market needs
- Enhance experiential learning
- Deliver deep foundational skills
- Adapt to new modalities of learning
- Further integrate liberal arts, the professions, and faith
- Grow a diverse, thriving community
- Ensure affordability
- Share our story
- Expand connections and partnerships
- Deepen our culture of student support

Grow A Diverse, Thriving Community

One of our greatest opportunities is to continue to broaden who we serve; to expand our us. This means continuing to expand and support the diversity of our student population. Thirty-one percent of our recent freshman class is racially and ethnically diverse, making Lipscomb one of the most diverse universities in its peer group. Lipscomb also serves an increasing number of students who are the first in their families to attend college, is enlarging its percentage of students coming from outside the southeast, and has embraced students coming from a wide range of Christian and other faith backgrounds. This growing diversity is an incredible opportunity to develop a thriving university community where all can be served well. In doing so, we must robustly practice Christian hospitality and include everyone who wants to participate in our community. People of all faiths, all races, and all backgrounds should experience a sense of belonging at Lipscomb. Embracing the great diversity of the communities we serve, will strengthen the university. This is an opportunity to live the teachings of Jesus in our daily lives as

a community and strengthen our community in the process. This is also an opportunity to increase resources to ensure all of our students thrive based on their needs.

Ensure Affordability

To continue to grow a diverse and thriving community, we must also be accessible—and that calls on us to make Lipscomb as affordable as possible. The opportunities afforded by a Lipscomb education must clearly outweigh the cost of attendance. In an era of societal concern about the cost of education and student debt we have an opportunity to demonstrate our affordability. The return on investment from a Lipscomb education must be clear and compelling.

One of the many opportunities we have to achieve this will come from philanthropic support. Growing our endowment is one of our best opportunities to ensure the financial health of the university and to secure our long-term ability to deliver excellent education at an affordable cost. Inclusivity also promotes equity. We want to enhance opportunities for our students and to reach any qualified learner who wants a Lipscomb education.

Share Our Story

Lipscomb has been and is many things to many people throughout the university's 130-year history, and to fully seize our opportunities we need to share our story and who we are today. We must help people truly understand our impact, our calling, and the sense of pride we share in the university. This clarity of story will benefit our campus community and help current and future learners see their opportunities at Lipscomb. Fully articulating our shared identity today will take time and thought, but we already know many of the key elements. We are student focused. We live in a culture of growth, where students, staff, and faculty alike find and fulfill their calling. We educate the whole person in spirit, mind, and body. We develop emotional intelligence and value soft skills. Beyond this we must also clearly convey the nature of our community, the characteristics we seek in people joining us at Lipscomb, and the ways in which we include people in our community. Once we robustly articulate our story we will build a stronger university brand with greater clarity of message.

Build Connections

To fully realize our opportunities we must build strong partnerships and maintain those connections with effective communication. Whether with alumni and friends, employers, schools, or churches, effective partnerships will be vital going forward. We should build our relationships with churches, other faith-based institutions, schools, community colleges, and universities to reach potential students and inform them about Lipscomb.

These connections also serve needs far beyond student recruitment and support of our educational programs. We should utilize the good will and connections of our alumni to connect to partner organizations. Our alumni are crucial in their guidance for our students and their enthusiasm for the university. Nurturing alumni engagement with the university will benefit everyone in the Lipscomb community.

Responsive Service

Lipscomb's culture of service is strong, but we can deepen and extend our culture of service in meaningful ways. We can optimize our systems and processes for the benefit of everyone in the Lipscomb community. For students, staff, and faculty alike it should be easy to interact with

the university's system, get questions answered, and seek help in solving problems. Whether a student lives on campus or commutes, interactions on-campus and with the university should be seamless. Technology will certainly play a role in these enhanced services, but fully meeting this opportunity will also require a broadly shared culture of service throughout our community.

New Leadership

We are well-positioned to meet the opportunities above, given the existing strengths throughout the university. Our student-centered ethos is a major asset in this endeavor, and the high quality and great caring of our faculty and staff are invaluable. We also have the opportunity of momentum for change, with new leadership for the university and sense of optimism we share at this moment.

Aspirations

If we successfully build on our strengths and leverage our opportunities, we can achieve new levels of leadership amongst Christian universities and establish a reputation for excellence in student-centric service. In doing so we aspire to be a community committed to Jesus. We desire to provide excellent, whole-person learning experiences to instill a life of leadership, service, and faith. If successful, we will develop people to succeed in their vocation and contribute to the common good by living out faith in action.

Leading Christian University

We aspire to be a top tier Christian university in the United States. For us, being a leading academic Christian institution would be built on our real-world application of our Christian

Aspirations:

- Top-tier Christian university
- Help students see the fundamental connections between the liberal arts and the professions
- Establish a reputation for excellence in student-centric service
- Make Lipscomb a thriving, inclusive, innovative learning community
- Ensure our financial sustainability and ability to deliver affordable education
- Prepare our students for a life of service and citizenship

convictions. To accomplish this, we need to provide Christian thought leadership and work together to achieve recognition for our mission-focus and academic excellence. Ultimately, we will be known for the impact our graduates have on the world.

We aspire to redefine the Christian liberal arts university in ways that meet the needs of society. For us, a fundamental part of this is ensuring that our students connect their liberal arts learning with their future professional lives. Our students need to understand from the very beginning of their studies how liberal education supports fulfillment of their professional goals.

We want Lipscomb to be a place where hard conversations are encouraged and where difficult problems are solved. We want to meet students' needs in ways they value, and this will likely require adaptations in how, when, and where we teach. And, we aspire to lead other faith-based institutions in the diversity of our student body and

our thriving student experience. With all of this, we seek to make a compassionate impact on the community and serve as a resource and support like-minded organizations including churches, schools, and other Christian organizations.

Excellent Student Experience

Excellence in personalized and compassionate service should characterize all our endeavors. This should include efficient services, an effective organizational culture and practices, and a commitment to continuous improvement. We should also be known for our welcoming student experience—and as a place where people enjoy one-another’s company and have fun. This clarity of story and recognition for our service-oriented culture should be central to our messaging.

Christ-centered, Learning-Focused Community

Lipscomb must continue to advance its Christ-centered mission that has served students well for 130 years while deepening its relevance and reach. Learning at Lipscomb should meet the needs of a wide range of students by utilizing our existing capacity, leveraging our strengths, and meeting our opportunities. We aspire to meet student demand at Lipscomb Academy and across the university with academic programs that engage, challenge, and nurture each learner. To do so, we must ensure our programs align with market demands, while also maintaining the feeling of a close-knit community that are hallmarks of our university. We aspire to be nimble, to innovate, and to do so without compromising our high academic standards. Accomplishing this will likely require significant collaboration amongst the faculty and staff, between departments and colleges, and across the university. Deepening our culture of collaboration and improving communication on campus will be necessary to fully realize the robust learning community we seek.

We also envision a student body, faculty and staff who reflect the diversity of Nashville, Tennessee, our region and our nation. To accomplish this, we aspire to increase accessibility to Lipscomb for a broader population, embracing people from all backgrounds and races. This should include continued reconciliation with the Black community in Nashville and beyond.

Well Resourced and Affordable

We aspire to greatly increase our endowment to ensure that we can provide students with the support they need to learn, and to provide our faculty and staff with the resources they need to thrive in their professions. Achieving this level of institutional sustainability will be foundational to our ability to deliver the supportive, inclusive, and encouraging environment we envision in an affordable manner.

Student Impact

All of these aspirations support our primary goal of preparing our students for a life of service and citizenship. We want our graduates to be sought-after for their job-ready skills and abilities for life-long learning. We want Lipscomb graduates to be globally aware and culturally literate. And, we want them to deploy those skills to meet societal needs and fulfill their calling and purpose.

Results

If we leverage our strengths, utilize our opportunities, and fulfill our aspirations our achievements will ensure that Lipscomb University:

- Thrives as a collaborative community of faculty and staff who are Christ-centered and student-focused;
 - Influences the communities we serve through the vocational accomplishments of our students and alumni;
 - Welcomes people to a university experience that is accessible and affordable;
 - Provides access to our university for any qualified prospective student, ensuring that no one is denied an opportunity to learn with us due to cost;
 - Demonstrates to students that the value of their education greatly outweighs the cost;
- Instills in students an understanding of the value of liberal arts and integration of that learning with vocations;
- Produces alumni who are sought-after by employers;
- Engages alumni in the life of the university and the learning of our students;
 - Enjoys broad and deep strategic partnerships with organizations and individuals near and far;
 - Becomes a research organization;
 - Achieves international recognition as a solutions center;
 - Experiences financial vitality;
 - Recruits and retains excellent faculty and staff who see Lipscomb as the best possible place to work;
 - Spreads joy amongst the people and communities we serve; and
 - Strengthens perceptions of the Christian faith and community through the quality and impact of our work;

To establish our course toward these results the university begins a strategic planning process – Lipscomb Impact 360 – that will continue through the winter and spring of 2022. Join us in considering these possible futures, and add your faithful voice to these vital discussions of our shared future success.