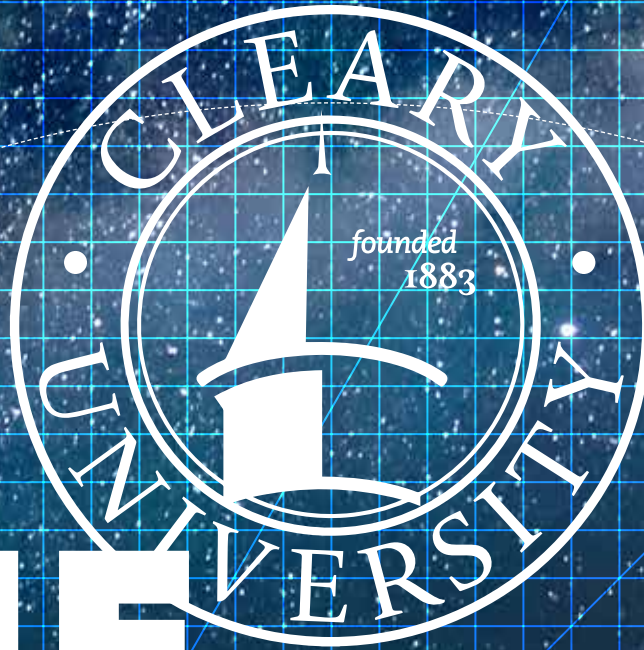




THE FOURTH WAVE

CLEARY UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGY
FOR ONE INTEGRATED UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028

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TO OUR CLEARY UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY:

As Cleary University approaches its 150th anniversary, we find ourselves at a defining moment. With pride in our storied past and a bold vision for the future, we have launched a strategic planning process to position Cleary for long-term growth, relevance, and impact. This process has brought together voices from across our campus and beyond - students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and community partners - to ensure that the direction we chart reflects both our shared aspirations and the evolving needs of the world around us.

Cleary has moved into its Fourth Wave - an era defined by the thoughtful integration of our Livingston campus and our accelerated online programs into one unified university. In this model, the campus remains the visible anchor of our identity, while our expanding regional and national reach provides the scale and financial strength to reinvest in student learning and the student experience. Together, these two segments are greater than the sum of our parts - each strengthening the other through shared credibility, expanded resources, innovation, and real-world perspective.

In today's rapidly changing higher education landscape, remaining static is not an option. We must think boldly, act strategically, and adapt continuously. This Strategic Plan is not simply a document - it is a roadmap for transformation. It outlines our commitment to delivering high-impact, workforce-aligned programs, and reinforces our belief that education should be practical, accessible, and rooted in real-world opportunity.

Cleary's distinctiveness lies in our entrepreneurial spirit, our student-first mindset, and our ability to meet learners where they are - whether they're launching their careers, serving their communities, or seeking new opportunities for advancement.

This plan affirms and accelerates our integrated Fourth Wave structure, with a bold 10-year "moonshot" to reach 2,000



students by 2035 and a focused set of near-term priorities around enrollment growth, brand identity, operational excellence, the student experience, community engagement, and financial sustainability - ensuring both segments of our university continue to strengthen and reinforce one another.

Throughout this process, we have remained guided by transparency, inclusion, and a deep respect for the people who make Cleary special. I am especially grateful to the Strategic Planning Task Force and to all who contributed their time, insights, and energy to help shape this vision.

As we enter this next phase of Cleary's journey, I invite every member of our community to join us in bringing this plan to life. Your ideas, your dedication, and your leadership will be essential as we work together to build a stronger, more connected, and more impactful Cleary University - one that prepares future leaders and makes a lasting difference.

Thank you for being part of the Cleary Cougar community.

Sincerely,

ALAN DRIMMER
PRESIDENT & CEO

INTRODUCTION

Cleary University was founded in 1883 by Patrick Roger Cleary as The Cleary School of Penmanship in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Originally focused on teaching practical business skills such as penmanship and bookkeeping, Cleary has continually evolved to meet the needs of students entering an ever-changing workforce. Today, it offers a range of undergraduate and graduate programs tailored to a diverse mix of learners - including traditional college students, working professionals, and public safety personnel - across both classroom and online settings.

Guided by a mission of student-centered and inclusive professional education, Cleary equips learners not only with technical expertise but also with the interpersonal and employability skills needed to lead meaningful, successful lives. This commitment to workforce preparation is not new - it is the thread that connects every era of Cleary's history. From penmanship and bookkeeping in 1883 to business management in the 20th century to today's public safety and healthcare pathways, Cleary has always asked the same question: what do workers and employers need, and how can we deliver it? That orientation – practical, responsive, and built around real careers – is what distinguishes a Cleary education and what has kept the university relevant across nearly 150 years of workforce change.

The University's main campus in Livingston County, Michigan sits at the intersection of small-town charm and metropolitan opportunity - offering modern facilities, vibrant residential life, and competitive athletics alongside a Detroit education center and a growing suite of online programs. Most recently, the University welcomed its largest incoming class in decades, an indicator of strong momentum and increasing appeal to prospective students.

Today, Cleary is in what it identifies as its Fourth Wave - a period characterized by the intentional integration of its Livingston campus and its accelerated online programs into one unified university. This integrated model allows Cleary to strengthen both segments of its student population, expand national reach, and reinvest in the campus experience, ensuring that all learners benefit from a cohesive, forward-looking educational environment. What makes this model distinctive is the combination: a residential campus that anchors our identity, an accelerated adult learner model proven at scale, and a transformative teaching philosophy woven through every course we offer - delivered at accessible cost, across every stage of a career.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

At the heart of Cleary's academic model is its experiential, outcomes-driven approach. The Cleary Mind Framework integrates eight essential workplace competencies into a student's journey, ensuring graduates are prepared for today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities. By embedding these competencies into our programs and culture - through a model of transformative teaching that emphasizes active learning, real-world application, and practitioner-informed instruction - Cleary prepares students not just to succeed in their careers, but to lead with purpose and impact.

OUR CORE VALUES

STUDENTS FIRST

We put learners at the center of all we do.

COLLABORATIVELY ENGAGED

We break down silos to build collective impact.

COMMUNITY-CENTERED

We serve, reflect, and grow with our community.

ALWAYS FIND A WAY

We solve problems with creativity and determination.

MISSION

To provide a student-centered and inclusive professional education that equips students with employability skills and values to succeed in their career and life.

THE CLEARY MIND™ FRAMEWORK

CRITICAL THINKING

Analyzing & evaluating data to make informed decisions

PROBLEM SOLVING

Finding effective solutions to complex issues

ETHICS

Practicing principled and responsible decision-making

CREATIVE THINKING

Approaching problems with innovation and fresh perspectives

COMMUNICATION

Effectively sharing ideas, insights, and information

PERSUASION

Influencing others ethically and strategically

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Cultivating a mindset of innovation & opportunity creation

LEADERSHIP

Inspiring others and achieving meaningful goals

STRATEGIC PLAN COMMITTEE & PROCESS



Why the Moonshot theme?

During much of Cleary's strategic planning process, the leadership team worked in a converted planetarium - a space that naturally sparked conversation about exploration, trajectory, and long-term ambition. That environment inspired the team to adopt the concept of a "moonshot" as a way of framing Cleary's bold 10-year goal to reach 2,000 students by 2035.

The subtle rocket and lunar design elements throughout this plan reflect that spirit of aspiration, momentum, and disciplined execution - reminding us that transformational progress requires both vision and precision.

Background

In 2018, the University developed a 5-year strategic plan. The plan was a visionary and innovative articulation of the need for universities to build workplace competencies explicitly into academic curricula. Importantly, the University made significant progress in executing that plan.

In July 2021, when Dr. Alan Drimmer became President, he discussed the strategic planning process with the Cleary University Board of Trustees, and they jointly decided to revisit strategic planning at the start of the 2023 academic year.

In July 2022, the start of the 2023 academic year, President Drimmer and the Board discussed options for strategic planning. The Board was very supportive of developing a university-driven plan with input

from multiple stakeholders, including the Board itself. The Board encouraged President Drimmer to identify an experienced facilitator who could assist him and senior leadership with the development of the plan.

Chris Lambert, CEO & Founder of Life Remodeled, was selected to facilitate the Cleary University strategic planning process. Strategic Planning sessions with Lambert began in April of 2023 and were held on a quarterly basis to build out strategic priorities.

From 2024 to 2025, the Senior Leadership Team refined the strategic plan through an iterative process, incorporating stakeholder input and aligning institutional goals with long-term vision and operational realities.

NOVEMBER 2022	Initial Strategic Plan preparation meeting held off-site
FEBRUARY 2023	Board of Trustees approves Life Remodeled Next Level Nonprofit as strategic plan consultant and participates in Four Futures Workshop to help shape Cleary's 10-year vision.
APRIL 2023	Strategic Planning Session I Focus on team unity and overview of key components
APRIL 2023	All Hands Four Futures Workshop Faculty and staff envisioned Cleary's future; identifying scenarios that energized and concerned them; results informed the Strategic Plan's priorities.
JUNE 2023	Strategic Planning Session II Refining core elements of the plan
JULY 2023	Strategic Planning Session III Solidifying 1-Year Plan & Quarterly Priorities
AUGUST 2023	All-Staff Core Values Workshop Faculty and staff helped define Cleary's four core values
OCTOBER 2023	Strategic Planning Session IV Review and alignment of short-term and long-term goals
JANUARY 2024	Strategic Planning Session V Quarterly review and priority setting
APRIL 2024	Strategic Planning Session VI Brand strategy workshop
JULY 2024	Strategic Planning Session VII Comprehensive review and adjustment of plans
2024 - 2025	Senior Leadership Team refines strategic goals and finalizes written strategic plan.
AUGUST 2025	Finalize 10-Year Financial & Enrollment Projections
FEBRUARY 2026	Strategic Plan Gallery Walk Finalized draft presented to Board and Staff in separate workshops for stakeholder feedback.
JUNE 2026	Motion to approve 2025-2028 Strategic Plan at Summer Board of Trustees Meeting

STRATEGIC PLAN TASK FORCE & STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

The Strategic Plan Task Force was established with the primary goal of developing a university-wide strategic plan that represents and encompasses the input of all the stakeholders within the campus community including Cleary University leadership, faculty, staff, students, and the Board of Trustees.

Throughout the planning, development, and implementation of the strategic plan, the Strategic Plan Task Force is committed to fostering transparency and collaboration with all university stakeholders, ensuring their valuable perspectives contribute to our success. Cleary University's Strategic Plan Task Force solicited insights from the Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff through meetings and workshops to contribute to goal setting throughout the strategic plan.

TASK FORCE

- President & CEO
 Chief Academic Officer
 Chief of Staff
 Chief Operating Officer
 Chief Advancement Officer
 Chief Financial Officer
- Chief Athletics & Student Affairs Officer
 Chief Information Officer
 Chief Human Resources Officer
 Strategic Plan Consultant, Life Remodeled

STRATEGIC PLANNING FACILITATION

“Next Level Nonprofit” Methodology

To enhance strategic planning and operational effectiveness, Cleary University embraced the “Next Level Nonprofit” methodology developed by Life Remodeled, a Detroit-based nonprofit organization. Under the guidance of Chris Lambert, Founder & CEO of Life Remodeled, this approach was integrated into our strategic planning process, guided by the President, the Strategic Plan Task Force, and the Board of Trustees.

This system was designed specifically for nonprofit organizations to guide them in reaching their goals with the highest efficiency by executing four fundamental components: team unity, compelling vision, the right strategy, and disciplined execution. This section outlines each component of the process and what the team accomplished in each phase.

1 | TEAM UNITY

- **FUNCTION & ACCOUNTABILITY OVERVIEW**
The Strategic Plan Task Force revamped the organizational structure to optimize operational efficiency and ensure clear accountability.
- **CULTURE & CAPACITY ASSESSMENT**
We adopted tools to assess and ensure alignment of team members with Cleary University’s core values, enhancing our ability to place the right people in the right roles.
- **AFFIRMATION & CHALLENGE MATRIX**
We focused on retaining top talent by balancing high affirmation with high challenges, ensuring our staff have the support to achieve ambitious goals.

2 | COMPELLING VISION

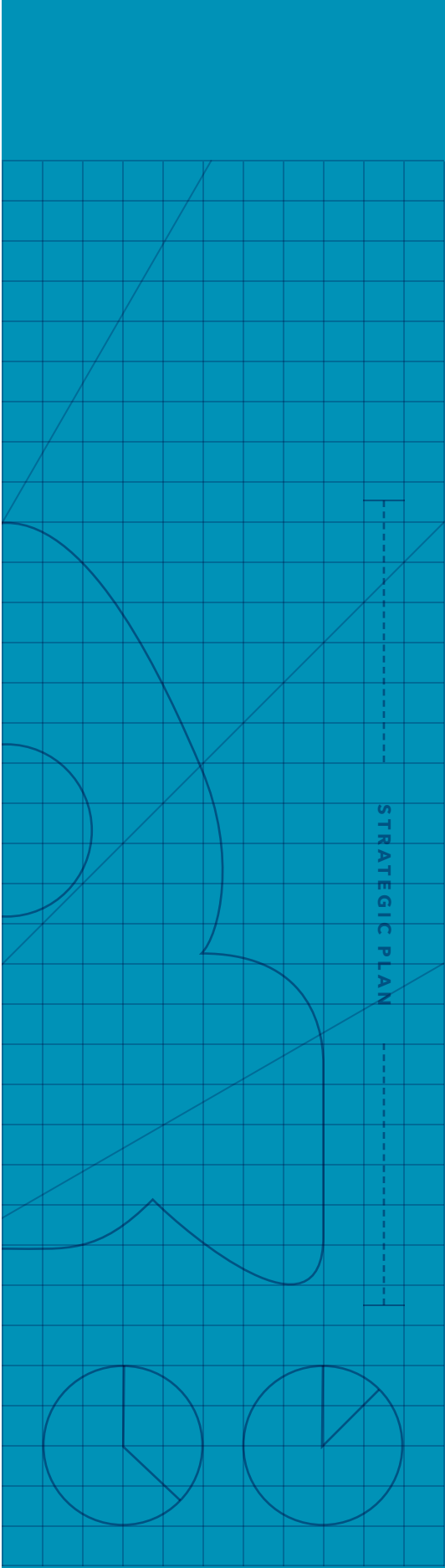
The Task Force engaged in introspective analysis to redefine our purpose and identity, answering fundamental questions about our mission, the benefits we offer to our community, and the larger problems we aim to solve.

3 | THE RIGHT STRATEGY

- **LONG-TERM PLANNING**
The team defined a 10-year “Moonshot” goal to set a clear, ambitious, yet achievable target for the university
- **MEDIUM-TERM OBJECTIVES**
A 3-year “Snapshot” was created to bridge our current state to our long-term vision, supported by annual goals and quarterly priorities.
- **REGULAR REVIEWS**
Strategic priorities are regularly reviewed during off-site meetings to ensure alignment with our overarching goals.

4 | DISCIPLINED EXECUTION

The Senior Leadership Team commits to regular reviews of strategic execution, maintaining a rigorous schedule of meetings to track progress, address issues, and ensure transparency and accountability across all departments.



WHERE WE'VE BEEN

WAVE ONE : 1883 - 1983 FOUNDATIONS OF PRACTICAL BUSINESS EDUCATION

HISTORY OF CLEARY UNIVERSITY



CLEARY UNIVERSITY

1880

FOUNDATIONS OF BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

Patrick Roger Cleary founded The Cleary School of Penmanship in Ypsilanti, Michigan in 1883—penmanship being a significant business skill in the late 19th-century workplace. At its inception, it primarily offered courses in penmanship and bookkeeping to help students acquire practical business skills and move into the world of work. Cleary University was Washtenaw County's first independent college, sitting alongside its two neighboring public institutions, the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University. By 1900, Cleary had 150 students enrolled and offered 20 courses including the first telegraphy training.

1900

ERA OF COLLABORATIVE GROWTH

In 1913, Cleary College and the Michigan State Normal College established a collaboration to provide the first joint college program approved by the state. In this program, high school business teachers could study education at the Normal College and business at Cleary College. By 1925, enrollment had grown to 325 students, and Cleary courses were given credit at both the University of Michigan and Michigan State Normal College.

Cleary University continued to grow until enrollment peaked in the mid-1960s with over 1,400 students being enrolled in Cleary College's 146 classes, however, after 1965 enrollment at Cleary College began to decline due to the establishment of the publicly funded and less expensive Washtenaw Community College (WCC).



VISIONARY EXPANSION

In 1979, Bursely identified that Livingston County was an untapped market for higher education, and that the community was not served by any college or community college at that time. Cleary opened a second campus in Livingston County at Brighton High School and then modernized the facilities and curriculum. These moves reversed the fortunes of the college and enrollment began rising, reaching 765 by 1980. In 1983, Cleary University broke ground on its permanent campus in Livingston County.

ASCENT TO ACADEMIC DISTINCTION

In 1968, Cleary Business College was accredited as a junior college of business by The Association of Independent Colleges and then as a senior college of business in 1970. The school's change to university status was approved by the Michigan State Department of Education and the North Central Association in 2002 and Cleary College became Cleary University.

After peaking in the 1960's, enrollment experienced a steady decline through 1978 when the Board of Trustees named Gilbert Bursely President. President Bursely made several modifications that reversed the decline of enrollment.

WAVE TWO : 1984- 2011 EXPANSION & RELOCATION TO LIVINGSTON COUNTY

CLEARY UNIVERSITY

WAVE THREE : 2012 - 2020 CAMPUS LIFE & ATHLETICS RENAISSANCE

RENAISSANCE OF STUDENT LIFE

In 2012, Cleary University began rebuilding its on-campus student population by reintroducing athletics, starting with men's and women's cross-country and golf. Since then, soccer, bowling, baseball, softball, wrestling, hockey, esports, and basketball have followed. To support this growth, Cleary opened Lake Trust Stadium in 2018, home to baseball, softball, and soccer.

In 2016, Cleary opened its first on-campus dorm, followed by a second in 2018. The North and South dorms together house 187 students in fully furnished semi-private suites with bedrooms, baths, and shared kitchens and living areas. A full dining hall offers weekday meals and weekend brunch.

In 2019, the University renovated and renamed the Johnson Center as Cleary Commons, upgrading classrooms to support hybrid learning. At the same time, Cleary invested in campus life enhancements - adding fire pits, volleyball and basketball courts, showcasing Secunda art, and creating new spaces for student events and clubs.

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION AND RENEWAL

In 1996, Cleary recognized the need to expand its Ypsilanti campus. In 1998, the university applied to rezone 9 acres of its property, but without sufficient community support, the plan was halted. Cleary then chose to relocate its main campus to a more scalable site - first temporarily to Ann Arbor, where a facility opened in 1999, and ultimately to Howell. The Ann Arbor campus served as the main location until its sale in 2015.

In 2012, Cleary unveiled the Arthur Secunda Museum to honor the renowned artist and his legacy. The museum offers the Livingston County community access to an impressive collection of Secunda's work, including paintings, sculptures, prints, and more. It provides a rich look at the evolution of his style and contributions to the art world. Today, the museum serves as a cultural hub for art lovers and a lasting tribute to Secunda's impact.





TAPPING INTO NEW SEGMENTS

In 2021, Cleary University made a bold strategic move by launching the Public Safety pathway - an accelerated, workforce-aligned pathway to bachelor's and master's degrees for sworn officers, civilian staff, and their families. What began with the Detroit Police Department has since expanded statewide and into cities across the U.S., positioning Cleary as a first-mover in a high-need, underserved market.

Launched in 2021, this initiative transformed Cleary's trajectory, creating a scalable enrollment model that, within three years, reached more than 1,000 students and graduates with a retention rate of 84%. The program's success rests on generous transfer credit, a one-night-per-week hybrid format, and strong departmental partnerships.

The program not only expanded the University's reach but also redefined its infrastructure. A new Detroit education center and a cross-functional Graduation Team now serve a growing adult learner population. More than a degree pathway, the Public Safety pathway is a strategic pillar - fueling Cleary's growth, relevance, and competitive edge.

A CULTURAL HUB

Cleary University is home to the Arthur Secunda Museum, which houses the world's largest collection of works by internationally renowned artist Arthur Secunda. Since its founding in 2012, the museum has become a vital cultural and academic asset, offering a creative space for students, faculty, and community members to engage with the arts.

In 2024, Cleary secured major federal and state funding - including a Save America's Treasures (SAT) grant - to support the museum's growth. This investment enabled the hiring of its first full-time curator, who is modernizing collections management, advancing exhibit curation, and expanding educational programming. The museum is now poised for transformative expansion over the next three years.

A strategic roadmap will further elevate the museum's role as a campus centerpiece and regional cultural hub. By strengthening partnerships and enhancing public engagement, Cleary is deepening its commitment to experiential learning, cultural enrichment, and community connection.

WAVE FOUR : 2021 - PRESENT INTEGRATED CAMPUS & ONLINE GROWTH

2025 & BEYOND

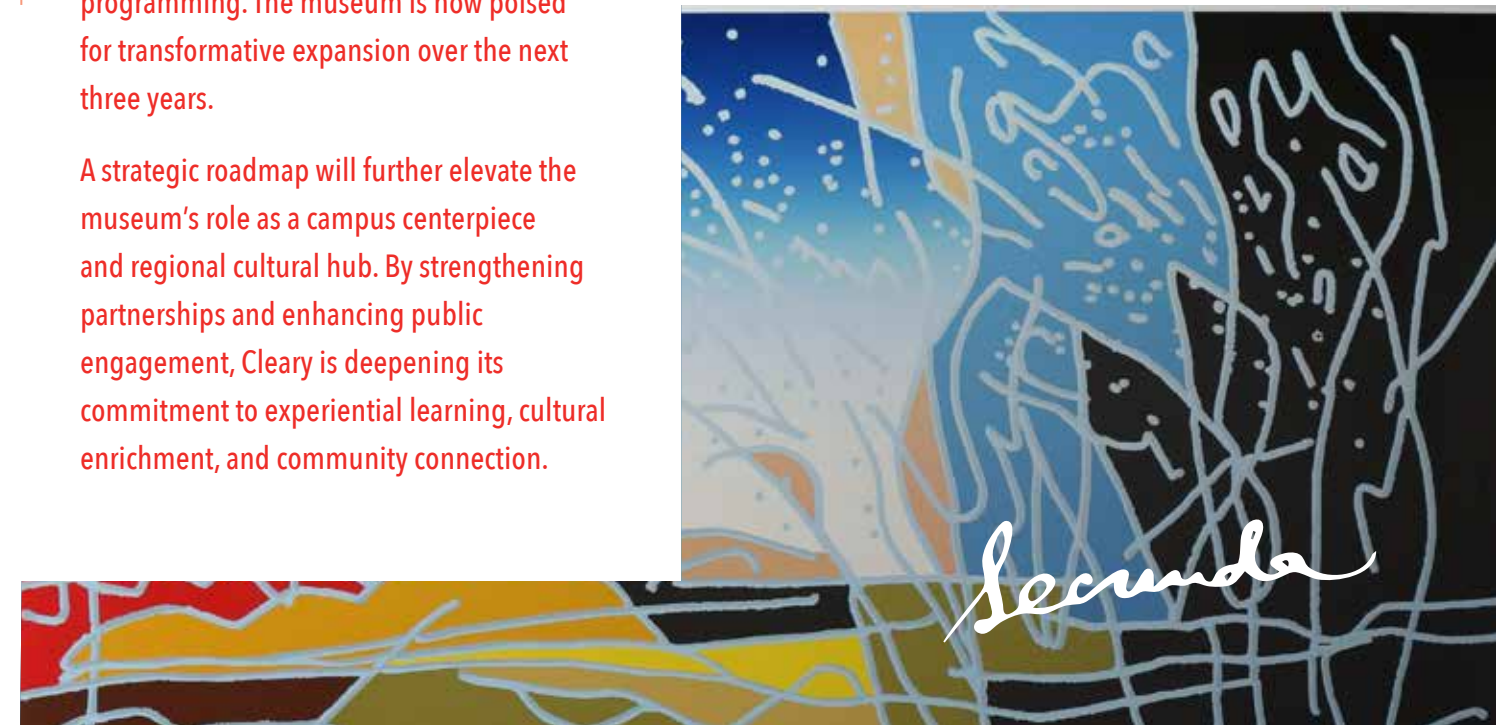
Today, Cleary University operates a vibrant main campus in Howell and an education center in Detroit, offering ABA, AS, BBA, BS, MBA, and MS degrees across in-person and online formats. We serve a diverse student body of traditional undergraduates, adult learners - including those in our expanding Public Safety pathways - and graduate students.

Since 1883, Cleary has remained focused on practical education, community responsiveness, and technological innovation. From penmanship to business leadership, from telegraphy to e-learning, we've adapted to workforce needs and societal change. Our holistic approach - embodied in the Cleary Mind™, athletics, and student life - prepares learners for life and career. Through strategic partnerships and enduring agility, Cleary continues to grow with purpose, positioning itself for a bold, student-centered future.

CULTIVATING THE CLEARY MIND™

In June 2018, Cleary's innovation shone through with the launch of The Cleary Mind™. This set of eight core competencies - critical thinking, problem solving, ethics, creative thinking, communication, persuasion, entrepreneurship, and leadership - is woven into every course alongside technical skills, giving graduates a competitive edge in the workforce.

When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted operations in March 2020, Cleary quickly pivoted to remote learning while maintaining its focus on The Cleary Mind. The University transitioned to Canvas and partnered with Red Shelf to provide e-texts. Despite the global challenges, Cleary continued to grow during this period, demonstrating resilience and adaptability.



OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE



OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE: CLEARY'S FOURTH WAVE

Cleary University is in its fourth wave - a defining era in which our Livingston campus and our accelerated online adult programs grow together as one integrated university, not as parallel operations. In this Fourth Wave, Cleary's online and hybrid programs provide the scale, reach, and financial strength that enable reinvestment in our physical campus. At the same time, the Livingston campus serves as the visible anchor of the Cleary brand and the innovation laboratory for our academic, social, cultural, and athletic model.

The Fourth Wave reframes Cleary's future around a simple premise: one Cleary, two segments.

- Adult & accelerated learners enrolled nationwide in flexible and workforce-aligned pathways
- Traditional undergraduates living, learning, and leading on our campus in Livingston County

Rather than building two separate institutions, Cleary is intentionally designing a unified university ecosystem where insights, programs, and experiences flow between segments. Ideas piloted on campus become refreshed online courses; the lived experience of working adults enhances curriculum for traditional students; and shared Cleary Mind™ competencies ensure all learners receive a consistent, values-driven education.

This integrated model supports Cleary's 10-year moonshot to serve 2,000 students by 2035. By growing with purpose - across both our physical and digital footprints - we strengthen our academic reputation, expand opportunity, and reinforce our impact across Michigan and beyond. This two-segment model also creates a strategic advantage that extends well beyond Cleary's current program mix. Because the university serves learners across multiple modalities - residential undergraduates, working adults in public safety, and community-based professionals - Cleary has developed the infrastructure, employer relationships, and operational agility to expand into new fields as opportunities arise and workforce demand evolves.

THE MOONSHOT

2,000 students by 2035. One unified university. Two integrated segments. A decade of disciplined growth.



A VIBRANT ONLINE ADULT POPULATION

Vision for the Future

As the first of Cleary's two primary student segments in the Fourth Wave model, adult and accelerated learners form a powerful network of working professionals whose lived experience strengthens every part of the university. Their insight into the modern workplace informs course design, enhances faculty innovation, and expands career pathways for our traditional undergraduates.

Building on the explosive success of the Public Safety pathways - now more than 1,000 students

and graduates with an 84% retention rate - Cleary has established a nationally competitive model for adult education. In just three years, this program generated over \$5 million in net revenue, supported by exceptional student satisfaction (NPS of 70) and endorsements from department leaders statewide. Cleary now aims to bring this model to new professional segments, including call centers, insurance operations, administrative services, and other high-turnover fields that demand flexible, accelerated degree pathways.

Cleary's adult programs continue to excel because of three differentiators:

- Progressive credit transfer policies that dramatically shorten time to degree
- A dedicated student success team that drives retention, persistence, and satisfaction
- Competitive & transparent tuition models that make bachelor's & master's degrees accessible

In the Fourth Wave, this segment does more than bolster enrollment - it enables strategic reinvestment in the Livingston campus. Growth in adult programs fuels new learning spaces, technology modernization, athletic infrastructure, arts programming, and student support services. This virtuous cycle ensures that as Cleary expands nationally, our physical campus becomes stronger, more vibrant, and more central to our identity.

By scaling high-impact adult programs and expanding into new industries and geographies, Cleary positions itself as a national leader in workforce-aligned adult education - while reinforcing the strength of the traditional student experience at home.



A COHESIVE, COMMUNITY-CENTERED CAMPUS

Vision for the Future

As the second pillar of Cleary's Fourth Wave, the Livingston campus is more than a place where students live and learn - it is the institutional heart of everything Cleary does. For the 350 residential and commuter students who attend daily - many of them student-athletes - it is a hub for academic innovation, arts and culture, wellness, athletics, leadership development, and community engagement. But it serves the entire university beyond that population: anchoring Cleary's brand, signaling credibility to students and partners alike, and serving as the innovation laboratory where new ideas are developed and scaled across both segments. Without this anchor, Cleary's accelerated online programs are simply online programs. With it, they are part of something larger - a university with a place, a culture, and a mission that can be seen and trusted.

Guided by a comprehensive Campus Master Plan, Cleary is reimagining its physical footprint to create a cohesive ecosystem of learning, living, culture, wellness, and community connection - ensuring that campus investments directly support enrollment growth, student success, partnerships, and long-term sustainability.

Traditional students in this model benefit from a unique advantage: access to Cleary's extensive network of working adults and alumni. Through mentoring, internships, applied projects, and real-world learning experiences, these connections enrich the education of campus-based students and offer earlier career clarity than at peer institutions.

Just as the Fourth Wave calls for balance between Cleary's two student segments - traditional and adult - it also calls for balance within the traditional population itself. A healthy mix of student-athletes and campus life students creates the vibrant, multifaceted student culture that strengthens retention, enhances belonging, and attracts a wider range of learners. Cleary's goal is a campus community where athletes and non-athletes learn, live, and lead together.

Taken together, these investments position the Livingston campus as an inviting, community-centered hub - a place where traditional students thrive, adult learners remain connected, and Cleary's Fourth Wave vision becomes a lived experience every day.

1 | CAMPUS CONNECTIVITY

Pathways to unite and inspire

- New walkways, greenspaces, and gathering nodes linking residence halls, classrooms, student hubs, cultural venues, and community-facing spaces
- A welcoming campus gateway and modernized wayfinding that improve visibility, accessibility, and first impressions for visitors and partners
- Outdoor environments that integrate art, wellness, and informal gathering into daily campus life and public engagement
- Sustainability practices such as green infrastructure, stormwater management, and flexible expansion zones supporting long-term growth

2 | THE CLEARY CATAMOUNT

A proposed hub for student life, community, and experiential learning

- A welcoming hub for daily student life, connection, and engagement
- A vibrant dining and gathering ecosystem that brings together students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners
- Flexible venues for arts initiatives, public programming, and cultural engagement that strengthen Cleary's community footprint
- Experiential learning partnerships in hospitality, event management, arts engagement, and community-based programming

3 | ATHLETICS, WELLNESS & ENGAGEMENT

Strengthening performance, connection and campus vitality

- Modern athletic and recreation facilities that strengthen recruiting, retention, wellness, and community engagement
- Year-round training and multi-use environments supporting performance development, intramurals, and partnership programming
- Flexible indoor spaces for wellness, leadership development, and co-curricular programming
- Academic and hybrid-capable facilities that support instructional growth, innovation, and workforce-aligned delivery

WHERE WE'RE GOING

A FUTURE BUILT ON PURPOSE

From our founding in 1883 as a school of penmanship to our evolution into a forward-looking professional university, Cleary has always adapted to meet the needs of a changing workforce. We do so again now, in a higher education landscape shaped by declining high school graduate populations, intensifying competition from public universities and online providers, and rising student demand

for affordable, workforce-aligned degrees. Cleary's response - a residential campus paired with a proven accelerated adult learner model, delivered at accessible cost - is precisely the combination this moment rewards. The strategic priorities that follow strengthen this Fourth Wave model, in which our Livingston campus and accelerated online programs reinforce one another and carry our mission forward.

STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES FOR 2025 - 2028

1 | ENROLLMENT GROWTH & DIVERSIFICATION

2 | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3 | BRAND IDENTITY

4 | OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

5 | STUDENT EXPERIENCE

6 | FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

2035 MOONSHOT: 2,000 STUDENTS



ENROLLMENT GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION

Broaden and expand Cleary’s academic offerings to reach new student segments and better meet workforce needs.

Cleary University’s vision to double its student population over the next decade begins with bold, targeted enrollment growth. This priority focuses on reaching 1,500 students by Fall 2028 while diversifying the student population and improving retention. It supports the university’s two-pronged strategy: scaling successful online adult learner programs and expanding the on-campus student base.

To meet evolving demographic and workforce needs, Cleary will expand its reach through program innovation and partnerships. This includes introducing three new degree programs and two new major concentrations in high-demand fields such as information technology and healthcare - sectors where Cleary’s flexible, employer-connected delivery model is uniquely suited to close the gap between workforce supply and community need. These offerings will attract a broader student body, including adult learners, first-generation students, and career-changers. Cleary will establish annual enrollment goals and actively monitor its student population mix - adjusting recruitment and retention strategies as needed to maintain a healthy, sustainable balance.

Building on the Public Safety pathway, Cleary will pursue new police department partnerships while adapting this model to other working adult populations. A professional program modeled after this framework will support online growth, retention, and real-world impact.

Cleary will also maintain a dual enrollment and early college program of 50 students annually, strengthening pipelines to higher education. Alongside growth, Cleary is committed to building a culture of continuous improvement in student retention - systematically tracking year-over-year performance, implementing data-informed strategies, and making steady incremental gains over the next decade. Sustaining growth requires aligning enrollment goals with budget forecasting, resource allocation, and staffing models so that programs, student services, and technology scale with demand.

Cleary also recognizes the external challenges ahead - declining numbers of traditional students, competition for adult learners, and heightened expectations for affordability and flexibility. By embedding adaptability into its planning through semester priorities and annual leadership reviews, the University will respond proactively while keeping student success at the center.

By focusing on enrollment growth and diversification, Cleary affirms its commitment to accessible, relevant, and future-focused education designed to meet both individual aspirations and workforce needs.



3-YEAR GOAL: Increase total enrollment to 1,500 students while enhancing student diversity and retention.

OBJECTIVES 2025 - 2028	OWNER
Develop at least one new professional program modeled after the Public Safety pathway.	President & CEO
Improve student retention by approximately 0.5 percentage points annually through data-informed persistence strategies.	Chief Operating Officer
Evaluate and implement three new academic degree programs and two new major concentrations.	Chief Academic Officer
Set annual enrollment targets and maintain a balanced mix of undergraduate/graduate, traditional/accelerated, and athlete/non-athlete populations, adjusting recruitment and retention strategies as needed.	Chief Operating Officer
Expand Public Safety enrollment by securing two additional major police department partnerships.	Chief Operating Officer
Maintain dual enrollment/early college program to 50 students annually.	Chief Operating Officer
Evaluate 4–6 prospective athletic programs over the next three years and implement those with demonstrated ROI and strong enrollment potential (target of 1–2 launches).	Chief Athletics & Student Affairs Officer

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Deepen our relationships with local and regional partners to expand access, cultural enrichment, and societal impact.

Cleary University is committed to strengthening its role as a vital community partner. In today's educational landscape, institutions are increasingly called to contribute beyond the classroom - to the cultural, civic, and economic life of their regions. Cleary is responding with a multi-pronged approach that includes the creation of a Community Hub, expansion of the Arthur Secunda Museum's impact, and new University-to-Business partnerships. Together, these initiatives position Cleary as a more inclusive, connected, and responsive anchor institution within Livingston County and Southeast Michigan.

A key component of this effort is the continued development of the Arthur Secunda Museum, a signature cultural asset for the university and the region. As home to the world's largest collection of Secunda's work, the museum connects Cleary students, faculty, and the public to the visual arts through exhibitions, programming, and learning experiences. The museum's growth is largely grant-funded, protecting institutional resources while generating significant community goodwill, regional visibility, and experiential learning opportunities that no classroom can replicate. Cleary has leveraged this external investment to develop a detailed Secunda Museum Strategic Vision to guide growth in four areas: collections care, visitor engagement, campus integration, and community partnerships. For a university of Cleary's size, a fully funded cultural institution of national significance is an outsized asset - one that strengthens alumni engagement, supports donor cultivation, and anchors Cleary's identity as a place where learning and community intersect.

The plan calls for deeper integration into academic life and increased public access - creating experiential learning opportunities in fields like arts management and event planning, while building stronger ties with local schools and organizations.

Cleary is also launching a Community Hub that will host at least three public arts and culture events annually. This gathering space will enhance Cleary's civic and cultural presence, inviting broader community participation.

Finally, Cleary will build one new University-to-Business partnership per year, focusing on organizational training programs in areas such as leadership and entrepreneurship - supporting both workforce development and institutional reach.



3-YEAR GOAL: Strengthen Cleary University's role as a community partner.

OBJECTIVES 2025 - 2028

OWNER

Establish a Community Hub hosting at least three public arts & culture events annually.

Chief of Staff

Develop and implement a strategic roadmap for the Secunda Museum in Livingston County.

Curator,
Secunda Museum

Gain one new University-to-Business partner per year for organizational training programs such as leadership and entrepreneurship.

Chief Operating Officer

BRAND IDENTITY

Sharpen and amplify Cleary’s brand to resonate with prospective students, partners, and donors.

To support Cleary University's growth and distinctiveness in a crowded higher education landscape, strengthening and activating our brand identity is essential. This strategic priority builds on the foundation established through the StoryBrand framework, which positions Cleary as a trusted guide -helping students navigate challenges and achieve success through practical, career-aligned education.

As Cleary advances its two-pronged enrollment strategy - scaling online adult learner programs and growing its on-campus population - our brand must speak clearly and persuasively to both audiences. We will tailor messaging, visuals, and marketing channels to the specific needs and values of traditional undergraduates and adult learners, ensuring each group sees themselves reflected in our story - and in Cleary's core promise: that a degree from this university is a direct investment in a stronger career and a more capable professional self.

A central focus of this work is highlighting Cleary's value and return on investment. Through a multimedia brand campaign, the university will emphasize career outcomes, student satisfaction, and program flexibility - building awareness and trust among prospective students and their influencers. Our strategy also includes aligning all communications - digital, print, media, and campus touchpoints - with our brand narrative. Consistency in voice, tone, and message will enhance engagement with students, families, alumni, donors, and employers.

Importantly, building Cleary's brand is not the work of a single office but a shared, collaborative effort across university leadership. The Director of Marketing will steward campaigns and messaging, while faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees will collectively reinforce the brand through their daily interactions, public engagement, and storytelling. This shared responsibility ensures that Cleary's identity is authentically lived as well as promoted.

Finally, Cleary will deepen its visibility within the local community and the broader higher education sector. Through public storytelling, events, partnerships, and thought leadership, we aim to increase recognition of Cleary as a high-impact, student-centered institution.



3-YEAR GOAL: Enhance Cleary University’s brand recognition and reputation in the higher education landscape.

OBJECTIVES 2025 - 2028	OWNER
Execute a multimedia brand campaign that emphasizes Cleary’s ROI and career outcomes.	Director of Marketing
Increase Cleary’s visibility and engagement within Livingston County and Southeast Michigan.	Director of Marketing
Develop and implement segmented marketing strategies for Traditional and Adult Learners.	Director of Marketing

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Improve institutional agility, systems, and staffing to support long-term success.

As Cleary University pursues ambitious growth - doubling its student population and expanding its national footprint - operational excellence becomes a critical foundation for success. This strategic priority focuses on aligning Cleary's systems, people, and processes with long-term institutional goals. It emphasizes efficiency, accountability, and the use of data to inform smarter operations and resource allocation.

Several initiatives are already underway, building on insights from our environmental assessment, institutional data, and internal feedback. These include formalizing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), advancing campus-wide process improvement efforts, and engaging staff and faculty in redesigning workflows that enhance agility and innovation. SOPs will now be embedded into key functions such as onboarding and explored for future applications including artificial intelligence.

A cornerstone of this work is the development of a comprehensive master facilities plan to guide current and future infrastructure investments. As Cleary reimagines the Howell campus and expands its residential student base, the plan will ensure that physical spaces support academic excellence, vibrant student life, and community integration.

Cleary is also modernizing core systems. We will fully integrate a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform across Academics, Admissions, Finance, and Development - improving coordination, transparency, and institutional agility. In tandem, the university will invest in upgraded financial planning and budgeting tools alongside enhanced IT infrastructure to support smarter, data-informed decision-making and scalable growth.

A new service organization will provide back-end operational support as Cleary expands outside Michigan, ensuring consistent quality and responsiveness for adult learners nationwide. Operational excellence is not just about doing things better - it is about building the institutional capacity to realize Cleary's boldest aspirations.



3-YEAR GOAL: Optimize institutional operations to support growth and enhance effectiveness.

OBJECTIVES 2025 - 2028	OWNER
Complete a comprehensive master facilities plan.	Chief Athletics & Student Affairs Officer
Develop and implement a strategic Human Resources plan.	Chief Human Resources Officer
Integrate CRM across Admissions, Academics, Finance, and Development.	Chief Information Officer
Evaluate feasibility of a service organization to expand operations outside Michigan.	President & CEO
Finalize Standard Operating Procedures and incorporate into operational excellence in areas such as onboarding and AI opportunities.	Chief of Staff
Launch a university-wide continuous improvement process with documented annual reviews of core operational functions.	Chief of Staff
Improve financial planning & budgeting software with upgraded IT Infrastructure.	Chief Financial Officer

ENHANCED STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Strengthen academic and co-curricular offerings to create a vibrant, inclusive, and supportive learning environment.

As Cleary University grows its traditional student population and reimagines its Howell campus as a vibrant, community-centered environment, the student experience must evolve in step. This strategic priority focuses on enriching how students live, learn, connect, and thrive - recognizing that belonging, engagement, and support are essential to retention and long-term success.

Three major areas define this work: expanding co-curricular opportunities, modernizing student-facing technology, and enhancing services that support personal, academic, and career development.

Cleary will strengthen student engagement through new programming and peer connection points. This includes launching and sustaining 12 active student clubs that foster leadership, social connection, and cultural expression, as well as implementing an intramural sports program that offers multiple opportunities each semester. These additions will build community across commuter and residential populations and contribute to a more energized campus culture.

To support an increasingly digital student experience, Cleary will continue its comprehensive overhaul of technology infrastructure. Improvements to Wi-Fi, learning platforms, and digital tools will provide a seamless and responsive environment for in-class and co-curricular learning. These upgrades are critical to meeting the expectations of modern learners and to fostering academic success.

Equally important is the expansion of support services for all student populations. Cleary will invest in enhanced academic advising, tutoring, and career readiness offerings - ensuring that first-generation students, adult learners, commuters, and residential students each receive tailored support throughout their educational journey.

Consistent with our commitment to transformative teaching, Cleary will strengthen academic and co-curricular programs through regular assessment and program review - evaluating whether students are achieving the intended learning outcomes of their programs and making adjustments to ensure continuous improvement. These efforts will help guarantee that every student's experience is not only supportive and engaging but also deeply connected to measurable learning and career success.



3-YEAR GOAL: Create a vibrant, supportive, and technologically advanced campus environment.

OBJECTIVES 2025 - 2028

OWNER

Establish and support 12 active student clubs.	Chief Athletics & Student Affairs Officer
Launch an Intramural sports program offering multiple opportunities each semester.	Chief Athletics & Student Affairs Officer
Overhaul the student technology experience, including Wi-Fi infrastructure, learning platforms, and digital student services.	Chief Information Officer
Enhance student support services including career, tutoring, and advising with tailored support models for all student populations.	Chief Operating Officer
Enhance academic & co-curricular programs through assessment and program review.	Chief Academic Officer

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Secure Cleary’s future through targeted fundraising and sound fiscal stewardship.

Cleary University’s long-term success depends on a strong, resilient financial foundation. As a small, tuition-dependent institution, we face the same fiscal pressures affecting many private universities: variable enrollment, rising operational costs, and ongoing infrastructure and technology needs. To thrive in this environment - and to achieve our ambitious goals for enrollment growth, campus transformation, and online expansion - we must ensure our operations are financially sound and supported by robust philanthropic investment. This strategic priority focuses on two key areas: responsible financial management and expanded fundraising capacity.

A central initiative is maintaining a balanced annual budget, including meeting revenue targets and controlling costs. This disciplined approach enables Cleary to invest strategically in high-impact programs, student support services, and campus facilities. To sustain this work, financial planning is a shared, collaborative process across senior leadership. Monthly forecasting meetings with department heads, coupled with annual leadership goal-setting and semester priorities, ensure that budget decisions, resource allocations, and long-term investments are firmly aligned with our strategic objectives. These targets are grounded in a comprehensive 10-year enrollment and fiscal projection, developed with detailed assumptions around tuition, persistence, new programs, and capital investment. As part of this work, we will refinance our residence halls to optimize their financial structure - reducing long-term costs and making student housing more accessible and financially sustainable.

To accelerate strategic growth, Cleary will launch a capital campaign that supports mission-critical priorities, including campus improvements, new academic offerings, scholarships, and community-facing initiatives. This campaign will align with our broader vision to double enrollment and build a cohesive, community-centered campus.

In tandem, Cleary is committed to securing year-over-year growth in cash gifts, pledges, and bequest commitments - building a culture of giving that engages alumni, corporate partners, and local stakeholders in the long-term success of the institution. These funds will directly support student success, program innovation, and long-term institutional resilience.

Financial sustainability is not only a matter of fiscal prudence - it is an institutional imperative and a shared responsibility. Through collaborative leadership, disciplined planning, and expanded fundraising, Cleary will remain agile in a changing landscape and deliver an exceptional student experience.



3-YEAR GOAL: Ensure long-term financial health while expanding philanthropic support.

OBJECTIVES 2025 - 2028	OWNER
Achieve annual operating revenue of \$19.1 M by FY2027-28.	Chief Financial Officer
Maintain annual expenses at or below \$14.4 M by FY2027-28.	Chief Financial Officer
Refinance Residence Halls to optimize financial structure.	Chief Financial Officer
Launch a comprehensive campaign addressing the capital, program, endowment, and unrestricted needs of Cleary University in alignment with its 150th anniversary in 2033.	Chief Advancement Officer
Secure year-over-year increases in cash gifts, pledges, and bequest commitments.	Chief Advancement Officer

IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

To ensure the successful execution of this Strategic Plan, Cleary University is committed to an implementation process that is transparent, inclusive, and data-informed - combining structured oversight with continuous reflection so that day-to-day decisions remain aligned with long-term priorities.

Semester Priorities (SPs): Every four months, the University sets clear semester priorities - our version of KPIs - that directly feed into our one-year goals and three-year strategic priorities.

Annual Goal-Setting: Senior Leadership meets annually to establish one-year goals that advance the 2025-2028 plan while reviewing progress against the previous year's objectives.

Financial Responsibility: Monthly budget forecasting meetings with department heads ensure that resource allocation decisions remain aligned with our strategic priorities.

Strategic Decision-Making: All major decisions - budgetary, programmatic, or operational - are evaluated through the lens of our strategic priorities and objectives.

Progress Tracking & Review: A structured review process allows us to monitor metrics, evaluate outcomes, and adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Transparent Communication: Regular updates to the university community and external stakeholders build trust and reinforce shared accountability.

Continuous Improvement & Accreditation Alignment: This Strategic Plan is integrated with Cleary's continuous improvement processes and assessed in alignment with Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation standards, ensuring that planning, evidence, and improvement remain connected throughout the life of this plan.

Together, these practices ensure that this plan is not a static document but a living framework - anchored in Cleary's mission, flexible enough to adapt, and built to carry us to our 2035 moonshot.

CONCLUSION

Cleary University's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan sets a bold course toward an ambitious future - doubling our student population over the next decade, transforming our Howell campus into a vibrant community hub, and scaling high-impact programs that meet the evolving needs of learners and employers.

Our six strategic priorities - enrollment growth, community engagement, brand identity, operational excellence, student experience, and financial sustainability - represent a cohesive and actionable roadmap toward our 10-year moonshot goal of serving 2,000 students by 2035. Each priority has been carefully designed to address the challenges identified in our environmental assessment while building upon Cleary's unique strengths: our entrepreneurial spirit, personalized education model, and deep community ties.

Together, these priorities strengthen Cleary's Fourth Wave - our unified model in which the Livingston campus and our accelerated online programs work in concert to advance one cohesive university.

This plan reflects more than institutional goals; it captures our collective aspiration to lead with purpose, deliver real-world value, and foster an inclusive, high-performing academic environment. It is both a vision for where we are going and a commitment to how we will get there - through collaboration, creativity, accountability, and action.

The road ahead will require ongoing evaluation, flexibility, and shared responsibility. As we move from planning to execution, every member of the Cleary community - faculty, staff, students, alumni, trustees, and partners - has a role to play in making this vision a reality.

In 2028, we will launch the next phase of our strategic planning process - mapping out a three-year plan that builds on our accomplishments and sets the course toward our 2035 moonshot. This continuous cycle of reflection and planning will ensure that Cleary remains adaptive to changing student needs and industry demands while staying firmly aligned with our long-term vision.

Together, we will not only shape the future of Cleary University - we will redefine what is possible for small, mission-driven institutions in higher education.



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