

# FORDHAM

## FRAMEWORK FOR OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Fordham grapples with the pragmatic work of sustaining ourselves while serving our mission. We play a long game, building on the work of centuries as we help our university flourish for years to come. We lean into our Jesuit tradition of *magis*, meaning “more,” evermore. With ambition for the good, we will set a course for the future.

In the increasingly difficult and competitive market of higher education, there is one way that Fordham stands alone. We are the Jesuit University of New York.

We teach students to operate on a world stage without losing their souls. For a lonely generation, we offer community, warmth, and meaning. For a generation worried about its financial future, we provide real access to the unparalleled opportunities of New York.

Fordham’s emerging strategic plan does not represent a dramatic pivot in search of elusive new trends. Instead, we should double down on who we are and *where* we are.

We want to execute better, to deliver boldly on our promises in each of our three categories:

- We should become more fully Jesuit, centering our students and establishing credibility as an institution that cares about their future.
- We should invest in a well-rounded university, filling gaps, particularly in STEM, while building on our strengths.
- We should engage more fully with New York, reveling in the opportunities it provides our students and faculty.

When we dream about our future, what do we aspire to?

We should become the first choice for students who want to matter to the world.

Fordham can stand out for connecting students’ passions to the pragmatic. We can imbue our students with a sense of purpose and also the skill and discipline to make a difference. And we do it all in the capital of the world, from Wall Street to the United Nations and beyond.

## I. PROCESS

Strategic planning must use broad inclusion to diagnose our needs, understand our strengths, and find the best ideas to succeed. This past year, we have asked deep questions of our community. From written surveys to broad planning sessions and 52 group listening sessions, we received input from 584 of our faculty, staff, and administrators, and 315 students. We had a significant response to our market research surveys, including responses from 618 faculty, staff, and administrators, and 1,893 students.

A coordinating committee helped design the listening process and sought data to test our collective instincts. We looked at peers to test Fordham’s performance. We examined retention data to understand which students leave us and why. To understand the perceptions of our strengths and weaknesses, we did formal surveys of (a) current faculty, staff, and administrators, (b) current students across our schools, (c) alumni, (d) employers who hire our graduates, and (e) potential undergraduate students from across the country.

This working paper summarizes what we learned and proposes a framework for the planning ahead. In this iterative process, we will ask for commentary on this document through surveys and listening sessions. We will invite creative thinkers to join facilitated brainstorming sessions about improving the student experience. The University Research Council will help us design a research hub, and identify and help dismantle some of the obstacles to interdisciplinarity. Individual faculties and the Faculty Senate will drive other areas.

We do not do our important work in a vacuum. As a university, we must stand out in an increasingly competitive higher education marketplace. We must compete for the best and brightest students. We must do our work well enough that our students graduate. The world does not owe us a “life of the mind” unsullied by practical considerations.

Real strategic plans make choices. We identify our greatest strengths, not make a list of everything the institution does. We propose strategic investments in key areas to create a rising tide to lift all. We work to embody the Jesuit principle of “indifference.” By identifying core principles and holding onto them fiercely, we relinquish our attachments to how we have always done things. We become nimble and brave enough to succeed. And we remember that the riskiest thing we could do is insist on doing nothing.

## II. ANALYZING OUR PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Together we do the work of strategic planning with clear eyes and open hearts. We are too eager to seek truth and solve problems to engage in denial. We start with diagnosis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

### STRENGTHS

**Jesuit Mission.** We build on great strengths as a Jesuit university, with five centuries of credibility in academic excellence, transformative teaching, and driving purpose. Our students give their highest marks for the quality of Fordham’s mentoring and teaching, student support, and warm community. Twenty-nine percent of current students surveyed came to us in part because of our Jesuit identity. The vast majority of students fall in love with the mission while here. Founded in response to religious exclusion, Fordham welcomes people of all faiths and beliefs.

**New York.** We teach on two beautiful campuses in New York City, the epicenter of the global economy and much of American culture, with satellite campuses in London, Westchester, and the Calder Center Biological Field Station. Fordham is an anchor institution, deeply engaged with the city through our partnerships and alumni, which gives our students access to unique opportunities.

**Tradition.** With 183 years of experience, Fordham has deep roots, credibility, and generations of loyal alumni eager to help.

**Faculty and Academics.** Fordham’s renowned faculty build its strong reputation for research and teaching, with particular strengths in the arts and humanities, social sciences, and the professions, including law, business, education, counseling, and social work. The lure of New York helps us recruit and retain excellence. We are highly competitive for the (admittedly limited) research funding available to our strengths in the humanities and professions. Our faculty mentor students well and teach in small classes (an average size of 23). Our undergraduate faculty-student ratio is 1 to 13.

**People.** Fueled by mission, our faculty, staff, and administrators create a warm and relational culture for students and each other. Many of our employees have dedicated their entire careers to Fordham. Roughly 4% of our students are the children of alumni and create generational loyalty. Students list the quality of community and mentorship as a top reason for choosing Fordham.

**Students and Diversity.** Fordham attracts students from all over the world. More than 50% of our incoming undergraduates are students of color, 8% are international, 20% Pell-eligible, and 25% first-generation, and we educate growing numbers of GI Bill veterans. Given the disruption created by the Supreme Court’s ban on affirmative action, our diversity will become an even greater draw for a generation of students that demands it.

**Reputation.** Fordham ranks in the top 20 private universities in the number of applications we receive—more than 44,000 annually. Fordham has a strong reputation and its professional schools, in particular, are highly ranked.

**Return on Investment.** In general, across our schools, student outcomes demonstrate the return on the expensive investment of a Fordham degree. We do experiential learning well and 90% of our undergraduates engage in at least one internship. Across schools, our graduates make active use of the network of 200,000 living Fordham alumni, along with millions of Jesuit-educated alumni more broadly. Within six months, about 90% of our undergraduate alumni have jobs or have enrolled in further education.

## WEAKNESSES

**Tuition dependence.** Fordham relies heavily on tuition revenue. More mature fundraising efforts began in the past few decades, and it will take longer to ingrain a more fulsome culture of giving.

**Yield.** Fordham is awash in undergraduate applications but does not compete well for admitted students, 90% of whom turn us down. Our yield is in the 9th percentile of private schools, in large part because of price. From the high cost of living in New York to our inability to compete on financial aid, Fordham’s net cost of attendance (our effective price, not our listed price) leaves significant gaps from established student need. It represents a higher cost than the schools many students choose instead, even schools of higher status and greater resources. Surveys of students who turn us down list finances as a top reason. Nor do we have the status necessary to attract more full-pay students to subsidize the rest, for reasons described below.

**Unfriendly to Transfers.** Fordham has created obstacles to transfer students that require dismantling. This work has begun, with faculty exploring the design of a more flexible and welcoming core curriculum. Until then, we limit the pathways through community colleges that help brilliant students find a way to afford college.

**Academic Substance.** Fordham has gaps in its undergraduate programs that make us vulnerable, particularly our historic underinvestment in science, math, and engineering. More than 47% of American college-bound students seek to major in STEM programs, following pivots in the job market. Only 25% of Fordham applicants seek to major in STEM and our yield of those admitted students is less than half of others. Government research funding also focuses on STEM, and so we have fallen behind in external markers of research prowess. While our graduate programs have proved nimbler in responding to student demand, we remain behind in structuring and supporting online and hybrid programs.

**Reputation and Rankings.** Fordham ranks in the 95th percentile of private schools in the number of undergraduate applications we receive, but we do not compete very well for admitted students. In surveys, prospective students, applicants, and current students listed Fordham as “somewhat” prestigious. Students have begun to move away from rankings as the primary driver of reputation, but they still matter enormously. Despite the high rankings of many of our professional schools and programs, the university rankings have slipped. Many of the factors in *U.S. News* university rankings measure resources. Last year, *U.S. News* changed the criteria to weigh opportunity more heavily. Private universities fell by an average of 10 spots. Fordham fell from 73 to 89. Rankings no longer weigh selectivity, yield, alumni giving rate, and other factors whose manipulation severely disrupted the American higher education system.

**Retention.** Fordham’s undergraduate retention rates are not as high as those of our peers, particularly for Pell-eligible students. Our first-year retention rate is 88.5%. The gap between Pell and non-Pell retention is four points. Most transfer to more affordable or higher-status options. The investments Fordham has made in recent years to improve these numbers helped cushion the blow of COVID impact but have yet to move us forward. We have made great progress in reducing the opportunity gap but remain behind peers in the lagging graduation rate. Losing students hurts us financially, in the rankings, and it indicates ways we need to improve.

Like many of our peers, we do not focus our teaching prowess on the first year. We provide a great deal of student support but do not road map or brand it as well as we might. Retention particularly lags for international and commuting students, who require more support. And we have small honors programs to engage and attract the top of the class.

**Rising University Costs.** As revenue begins to flatten, Fordham’s costs continue to rise, driven by inflation and corresponding increases in our compensation markets. It has become increasingly difficult to keep a Fordham education affordable, while supporting the faculty and staff at the heart of our enterprise. Fordham spends 60% of its revenue on employee compensation. Even when Fordham pays salaries and benefits at the top of national markets, those salaries do not stretch as far in one of the most expensive cities of the world. The cost of construction in New York has become astronomical, more than \$1,000 per square foot.

**Divisions.** Explaining the complexity of our campus choice to potential undergraduates dilutes our message. The Fordham community struggles with many such divisions: physical distance among campuses and long commutes to get to work; divides of employee status and bargaining units; silos that prevent collaboration.

**Inefficiency.** Business practices are old-fashioned, and we lack sufficient capacity to do real analysis. Inefficiencies in our systems, especially redundant and uncommunicative data systems, cost time and bandwidth. Internal communications need work. Our relational culture brings great strength but also includes resistance to change and long memories of past failures.

## OPPORTUNITIES

We have the opportunity to address the weaknesses above, build on our existing strengths, and more. (We will avoid repeating all of those here.) As described in the plan below, Fordham can engage more effectively with New York and the world, grow high-demand academic programs that serve student needs, and invest in research. We can better explain what is already special. Here are some other opportunities:

**Gen Z.** The research on Gen Z shows a real yearning for what Fordham does well. Mired in isolation and anxiety, Gen Z students seek community and meaning. They are cynical but determined to make a difference in the world.

**Philanthropy.** Fordham has the support of 200,000 living alumni, who donate an average of \$70 million a year in new gifts and pledges and who helped create a \$1 billion endowment. With new investments in fundraising staff, we should be able to build momentum and match the fundraising prowess of peers.

**Expansion.** On our two beautiful main campuses, we have space to build, and the potential of partnerships with developers nearby. We have real estate in Manhattan worth a fortune.

**Technology.** We can use technology more effectively to reach students, who have become more open and eager for hybrid learning. We will have the capacity to leverage AI to provide better service.

**Becoming Nimble.** We can serve a broader range of students, especially given our location near millions of working professionals. We can forge partnerships with every imaginable type of organization in New York. We can adjust our teaching to meet the workforce of the future.

**Global.** We can better engage our London campus and partnerships around the world, particularly within our global network of fellow Jesuit and Catholic institutions, and create pipelines of students in both directions. Our world-class theology and philosophy departments have trained leaders of Catholic universities on six continents. We can invest more in recruiting international students to the New York location they often prefer.

## THREATS

This is not an easy time for American higher education.

**Demographics and Competition.** We face a demographic downturn of 18-year-olds. COVID and bureaucratic mistakes also dramatically reduced the percentage of those students coming to college. This drives increasingly desperate competition to lower prices below what can sustain many institutions.

**Morale.** At a time of downturn in higher ed, exhaustion from COVID, the hit of inflation, and tumultuous political times, morale suffers across our industry.

**Disinvestment.** Over decades, government has disinvested from higher education and American global competitiveness. Pell grants have not kept up with the real cost of education. New York cut \$1.2 million in annual Bundy funding to Fordham last year.

**Diminishing Trust.** Higher ed has become a useful political football during a contentious election. The plummeting trust of the American people has now eroded faith in higher education. Despite clear evidence of the return on investment, the value proposition of education—particularly in the liberal arts—has come under attack. Society has become divided and polarized.

**Fewer Jesuits.** From its high point in the 1960s, the number of Jesuit priests has declined dramatically. The Jesuits themselves can no longer carry out the work of embodying mission alone. We risk dilution of our mission and identity. The global power of the Jesuit reputation is shrinking.

**Rising Anxiety.** Gen Z has been raised in an isolating and toxic world of social media, without trusted institutions to help them build community. Deeply wounded by the isolation of COVID, students suffered disruption of social-emotional development and academic preparedness. Young people are increasingly anxious and depressed.

**Affordability.** Gen Z faces an uncertain financial future, an economy about to be intensely disrupted by AI, and a dauntingly expensive cost of education. Students making one of the biggest financial decisions of their life expect results.

**Protecting Mission and Opportunity.** The Supreme Court has forbidden us from considering race in admissions, and many states have banned DEI work. We must work harder to support inclusion and our values. We do the work of ecumenical welcome and inclusion in a nation increasingly hostile to religion as such.

**Athletics.** The fast-changing regulation of college athletics has widened the gaps in competition and resources, making it far more difficult to stand out for athletic success.

### **III. CHOOSING A DIRECTION**

Fordham builds on enormous strength, competing with universities that have more resources and higher status. To fulfill our potential, however, we must do more to keep our promises.

For a lonely generation that has reason to be cynical about its future, we have the chance to stand out with credibility as a Jesuit institution determined to create community and make an impact on the world. We can widen and deepen our reach as a true university by becoming more interdisciplinary and impactful. And we can fully engage with our remarkable city, creating opportunities for faculty and students alike.

We must teach our students the skills, discipline, and knowledge to make a difference; the openness and wisdom to get it right; and the passion and purpose to care.

#### **Jesuit: Transformative Learning, Academic Excellence, and Driving Purpose**

Being Jesuit and Catholic is our identity, value proposition, and most importantly, the entire point of our enterprise. Few institutions are known for their habits of thinking, methods of teaching, and the quality of their values. We build on five centuries of credibility as a Jesuit university.

The Jesuits pioneered academic excellence, imbuing students with lifelong curiosity, intellectual humility, and the willingness to challenge assumptions. Ignatian pedagogy pioneered the neuroscience of teaching, with reflective practices and experiential learning. With these skills, students learn discipline and ambition for the good. We do not just teach facts—we cultivate wisdom.

As a Jesuit university, we educate the whole student—mind, body, and spirit. We wrap our students in pastoral care and practice radical hospitality. We welcome people of all faiths to be their full selves with us. We glory in our diversity while rooting ourselves in community.

We help students find lives of purpose and meaning. We focus on values, ethics, and the faith that does justice, and we do it in a deeply ecumenical and inclusive way. For a generation mired in anxiety and cynicism, we offer unapologetic hope. For a generation trapped by loneliness, we offer warm and loving community.

Now that the rest of higher education has caught up to us in adopting some of these principles, we must work harder to stand out for academic excellence and transformative learning. We know that more students will choose us when we can better explain and embody the value of a Jesuit education. By keeping our promises, we will improve our retention and graduation numbers, particularly to equalize opportunity.

## University: Research and Academic Excellence Across Broad Fields

The Jesuits helped create higher education as we know it, founding more than 700 colleges and universities on five continents by the 1700s. They did the proud work of our faculty today, pushing the boundaries of human knowledge and grappling with the deepest meaning of human expression. They spread ideas *to and from* every region of the world. There are 35 craters on the moon named after Jesuit astronomers.

In today's world, research brings prestige and reputation. It attracts the most talented faculty and it helps us matter to a broken world. At Fordham, we ensure that our research also enriches teaching instead of distracting from it.

As a university, particularly a Jesuit university, we model for our students what it means to seek truth with openness and humility. We imbue our students with lifelong curiosity to learn for the sake of learning. Together we unravel the toughest problems of the world.

To be fully a university, rather than a liberal arts or technical college, an institution must have a broad range of disciplines in conversation with each other. Universities glory in balance, in the conversations they create *among* disciplines.

Fordham contains much of that breadth already. We have core strengths in the humanities and social sciences, the subjects that help humanity understand and organize itself, build empathy and community, and strive for justice. With these subjects, we teach the skills necessary for meaningful careers, the responsibilities of citizenship, and a lifetime of curiosity.

We have proud strengths in the professions: law, business, education, counseling, and social work. Our faculty improves how society structures governments, economies, education systems, and social safety nets. We send graduates to the front lines of building opportunity, navigating ethics and power, teaching, counseling, and caring for those in need.

While building these great strengths, however, Fordham has fallen behind in its investment in science, math, and technology. This makes the University vulnerable at a time when students increasingly seek STEM majors in search of growing opportunities in those fields. It also deprives Fordham's existing academic strengths from the broader conversations of a full university. It holds us back from access to the great proportion of research funding only available to STEM or, in our case, interdisciplinary work connected to STEM.

Fordham has the opportunity to leap ahead, unencumbered by weighty investments in the status quo. We can create cutting-edge programs connecting STEM to our existing strengths. The future lies in the relationship between STEM and the humanities, linking science and creativity and proposing ethical guardrails to technology. We build legal capacity to regulate an escalating pace of change and harness the power of the economy for good.

We examine our curriculum, holding onto what is central. We remind a skeptical world of the value of the humanities in building critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and citizenship. We teach students to link their passions with the pragmatic, to seek knowledge for its own sake while they design meaningful lives and careers.



We also owe our students, the community, and Fordham itself an obligation to remain relevant. We look more frequently at our academic programs, both undergraduate and graduate, to ensure we are meeting student needs. In the overlap of our existing strengths, mission, and student needs, we aim in the direction the world is heading.

When we gather and focus our strengths on the urgent issues of the world, we work on issues that matter to this generation of students. And we persuade them we care. To make all of our research shine, we unlock the potential of interdisciplinarity. Why? Because complicated problems require the insights of different disciplines. Because scholars from other fields challenge us to look beyond the traditions of our own.

As a Jesuit university, we also have a moral imperative to focus our research on mattering to the world. By that, we do not just mean practical and technical problems. We seek truth. We remind a cynical world of our common humanity, build empathy that bridges differences, and inspire belief in human dignity. (This is the core of Catholic social teaching.) We also grapple with practical problems, finding ways to turn the power of the economy toward good, use legal regulation to achieve justice, and reimagine the structures of education and social safety nets.

## **Of New York**

The epicenter of the global economy, art and culture, American media, and the United Nations. New York proves the success of diversity, the power of bringing together striving people from every nation. It contains every imaginable type of business and institution, every opportunity for our students.

The city attracts our students (92% of surveyed undergrads tell us NYC is a big part of our appeal) and it helps teach them too. Fordham students revel in what they can learn from the city as they navigate its challenges and glories. They tell us that Fordham makes New York feel small and accessible as they venture out from the comfort of our community into the opportunities beyond.

As a 183-year-old anchor institution, we have deep and long-standing partnerships with New York. A growing number of undergraduates, 3,500 a year, take more than 150 community engaged learning courses. And 90% of undergraduates engage with internships, many of them doing more than one internship. Our professional schools have deep contacts with the robust local job market and clinical placements.

More than half of our 200,000 living alumni live nearby and they eagerly hire our graduates—from law firms to Wall Street, from government jobs to media.

But we are still scratching the surface.

## IV. ACTION ITEMS

How might we better fulfill our promise as the Jesuit University of New York? Because if we do this well, we will sustain the institution for centuries to come, carrying forward the mission and our impact on the world.

To achieve these goals, we propose to center our students, expand research and academic excellence, and forge community. This will require both changes in strategy and a new fundraising campaign that will inspire donors with our ambitions.

This is a five-year plan, but we will stop to evaluate and improve these strategies annually.

### Centering Students

We must design persuasive arguments about the value of a Jesuit education and the promise of New York, and then keep those promises. Across our schools, we will center our students and focus on mind, body, and spirit. In Jesuit tradition, we will hone their talents with brilliant teaching, inspire their ambitions, and imbue their lives with meaning and purpose. We will create a warm and supportive community and then send our students to learn on a world stage, fully engaging with the opportunities of our extraordinary city. We will teach our students both passion and pragmatism, a combination that will fuel their success in careers and in life.

- **How might we reimagine the Undergraduate First-Year Experience?**

Fordham already offers first-year students so much that is special, inside the classroom and beyond. How can we provide a clearer road map of all we offer (the daunting first year and beyond) and wrap it in the credibility of our Jesuit tradition? Can we combine this road map with a revised core curriculum once that work is done?

But not only that, how can we do more to fulfill our promises? We must find a way to engage every part of the class and every single one of our students.

Could we scale to all students the advantages of cohort experiences currently offered (in integrated learning communities, honors, athletics, and student leadership involvement)? Could we focus more of our best teaching on the crucial first year? As we launch the new Center for Educational Innovation, could we better embody our profound heritage of Ignatian pedagogy?

If we do this well, we could prove to more students why they should choose to come to Fordham, and we could persuade more students to stay. Investments in yield and retention will pay off in tuition, reputation, rankings, and mission.

- **High Impact Practices for All of Our Students**

We focus on undergraduate students in their first year as the most vulnerable, but our work cannot stop there. We should improve—and equalize—the Fordham experience across all years and in every graduate school. Our professional schools, by accreditation rules, tradition, and resources, often do this work best. How can we scale those lessons everywhere?

High-impact practices retain students and teach them well. How might we guarantee access to those practices to every student—participating in faculty research, internships, service learning, study abroad, and deep student engagement in clubs and teams? How do we ensure that every student can afford access to high-impact practices, and how do we work harder to close the gaps of class and race in our graduation rates?

- **Preparing for Careers**

How can we do more to prepare students for challenging careers and lives of meaning? How can we stand out for connecting passion (and lifelong love of learning) with the practical? How can we better help students find not just their first job but their vocation?

As the undergraduate faculty revises the core curriculum, we have the chance to remind students (and their future employers) of the value of fundamental skills, from critical thinking to emotional intelligence. We should continue to aim our pedagogy and curriculum to a fast-changing workplace, insisting on the relevance our students deserve.

In our Ignatian tradition, we know that experiential learning prepares students best. Could we guarantee access to both externships and community engaged learning courses for undergraduates? How can we speed up the work of forging partnerships with local institutions?

We should also invest in, and equalize, the quality of career services across schools. We should expand connections between students and alumni eager to help them.

In our enormous city, we could do more to pull in New Yorkers to the opportunities of lifelong learning.

- **Immersion in New York**

Students apply to Fordham in droves because of our remarkable city. How do we stand out for the quality of connection that students will receive? As we build experiential learning opportunities, how else might we connect to the city?

We have the chance to immediately expand the horizons of our students by encouraging them to fully engage with both of our New York City campuses. How might we bridge the long-standing divides between our campuses, both physical and cultural?

New York is the gateway to the world. Our students deserve expanding opportunities to study abroad, and Fordham benefits from far more partnerships around the world. Should we brand ourselves as global (as many institutions do), or focus on our unique advantages in New York?

- **Affordability and Opportunity**

We must better meet our students' financial needs. To serve our mission and academic ambitions, we must gather the best and brightest students, regardless of wealth. We refuse to allow the world to squander talent.

We also cannot survive forever by charging a higher effective price than the competition—including other institutions with far more resources and status to shower on students. Our inability to better meet needs reduces both our yield and our retention.

The obstacles we create for transfer students turn away the brightest community college students.

To sustain ourselves, we must fundraise more ambitiously. We must work harder to control our costs to keep ourselves affordable. We should do more to launch our graduates into meaningful careers that make the investment in our education worthwhile.

We should end class disparities in retention and graduation rates. By focusing on the high-impact practices above, by better targeting our financial aid to retain students, we could close the opportunity gap. With this focus, we could also improve our rankings by doing work we believe in.

## Research and Academic Excellence

- **Offering the Right Academic Programs**

We proudly hold onto what is essential about a Jesuit education, especially in a renewed undergraduate core curriculum. We also recognize that our students will inherit an economy about to be profoundly disrupted by artificial intelligence. We owe our students the skills to face an unimaginable pace of change—both those fundamentals that have become even more crucial and the nimbleness to adjust to the unknown.

How might we do more to provide cutting-edge programs in each of our schools? How do we better coordinate interdisciplinary programs across our schools?

- **Power of Research**

With limited seed money, how do we use strategy to maximize the impact of research? We seek to grow our reputation—in recruiting students and faculty—and our impact on the world that needs us. How might we reimagine university policies, procedures, and practices to remove structural barriers that inhibit interdisciplinarity? What systems could we design that would provide end-to-end research support services, match scholars with overlapping interests in different fields, help us dismantle the obstacles of our own making, and foster greater collaborative inquiry? With fundraising support and better access to grants that favor interdisciplinary work, we can make the whole bigger than the sum of our parts.

- How might we create a transdisciplinary research incubator that will spawn and support interdisciplinary research teams to address urgent societal challenges? We could harness the scholarly strengths and interests of our faculty with the astonishing resources and insights within the city of New York and beyond. We could structure the incubator to be evergreen, remain nimble in its focus, and draw upon and contribute to Fordham’s intellectual assets and creativity. We could engage current students and attract prospective students who care deeply about our shared future. We could leverage the network of Fordham alumni to access professional partnerships that can enhance the work of the incubator’s research teams.
- To seed an initial focus, we surveyed faculty who chose four current areas of overlap between our strengths and urgent issues: migration, climate change, AI, and democracy. In each of these areas, we bring our great strengths in the humanities, social sciences, and professions, with hundreds of faculty expressing interest in participating on project teams in one or more theme areas.

- **Applying Fordham's Strengths to STEM**

The world desperately needs the application of ethics to science and the guardrails of humanity for the unfettered growth of technology. How might Fordham become known for cutting-edge academic research and programs that join these worlds? We can make strategic investments in STEM that connect to our existing strengths in the humanities, social sciences, and professions.

This work is underway. We will continue to establish an ambitious fundraising goal to invest in endowed chairs and long-overdue improvements of labs and lab classrooms. We need to build a new STEM building. Through the ambition and leadership of the faculty, we will continue to launch interdisciplinary programs that will sustain us while making us more relevant. Through the School of Professional and Continuing Studies, we can launch applied health programs at the Westchester campus that meet overwhelming needs in the medical profession.

## **Forge Community**

At Fordham, we model the warmth of our community for students. Our connections to each other, and them, fuel our work and bring us joy. That community has frayed, however, under external pressures, the isolation of COVID, and our own human mistakes. As many of you asked, how might we come together again, to collaborate and connect? How can we build trust and hope? How can we model what it means to be Jesuit in our own community?

- **Transparency and Integrity.** At every leadership level, we must build trust through transparency and the power of shared governance, by listening to our community and fixing what is broken.
- **Leaning into Jesuit Mission.** Through the Mission Priority Examen this year, we will find better ways to lean into our Jesuit values and identity, modeling for our students what it means to find purpose and meaning in our work.
- **Unity.** How can we become one Fordham community, moving beyond our divisions? If we succeed, we unlock the resources of the power of the university, with research and teaching across disciplines: We work across silos, build a greater sense of belonging for all, and focus on lifting the whole institution for all of us.

## **Funding Our Dreams**

We cannot continue to rely on ever-increasing undergraduate tuition because we have priced ourselves higher than many of our competitors (as detailed above). Instead, we will look at academic areas where we can grow, particularly in our graduate and professional schools. We will continue to diversify revenue streams, from investing in high school pipeline programs to attracting more international students. As we optimize our research impact on society's pressing issues, especially in connecting our strengths to the STEM areas that attract funding, we will be more competitive for government and foundation grants.

In support of this audacious vision and plan, we will ask our alums, friends, and the broader funder community to invest in our bold and noble mission. The trajectory of universities is determined in large part by the support of their alumni and the size of their endowment. We will design the next Fordham fundraising campaign with new ambitions that inspire donors and align what we do with global betterment.

Most of our priorities are already clear:

- **Student scholarships** and support to level the playing field, with specific and ambitious goals.
- **Endowed faculty** positions, support of research and academic excellence, especially at the intersection of disciplines.
- **Academic facilities that attract and retain our students**, especially high-tech engaged classrooms across fields, from music practice rooms to applied health simulation labs.
- **Student support facilities that attract and retain students**. We need better spaces to fill real gaps: from woefully insufficient athletic locker rooms and strength and conditioning spaces to the quality of dining and community spaces at Lincoln Center.

With our strategic plan, we will add far more ambitious goals.

- We know that we need a new **STEM building** at Rose Hill to meet the expectations of future STEM students and to prepare them for the workplace of the future.
- We have building rights to do more around the outer edges of our **Lincoln Center** campus to expand our capacity and to reenvision that extraordinary location.
- As we gather the interests of our faculty together in areas that attract interest and funding, we will seek major investments in cutting-edge **research**.
- And so much more.

## V. NEXT STEPS

We will ask our community for feedback on this document, through listening sessions that harness the power of collective conversation, and through surveys for efficiency. The University Research Council will lead the work on designing a research hub. Deans and individual faculties will continue their work of curricular innovation and ideas to expand high-impact practices, particularly engagement with New York. We will bring together groups of creative thinkers to brainstorm about the first-year experience, with a consultant who will ensure we learn from the proven work of others while avoiding mere repetition of the market. The administration will work to improve financial aid strategy and fundraising, and find seed money for necessary investments.