



IMAGINE ROANOKE

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ROANOKE COLLEGE
AND THE 21ST CENTURY LEARNER



ROANOKE COLLEGE



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Maroons and Friends of Roanoke College:

At Roanoke College, we nurture imagination. For nearly two centuries, we have inspired our students to believe in braver versions of themselves, envision worlds beyond those they already know and understand, and run in the direction of big questions and complex challenges.

Albert Einstein once proclaimed that imagination is more important than knowledge. Never before has Einstein's notion been truer than in the technology-driven, information-rich 21st century, where knowledge is widely accessible beyond college classrooms, textbooks, and laboratories. It is in our pockets, at our fingertips and is generated at lightning speed. The future demands learners, employees, and citizens with the skills to navigate this vast sea of information and the *imagination* to leverage it for innovation and meeting the world's greatest needs.

The opportunities and challenges of this century aren't for the faint of heart. We're depending on our students to lead a future that requires not only knowledge and imagination but also courage, leadership, and character. The question at hand, therefore, is not *whether* higher education should change to advance this future—it is *how* we should change.

Roanoke College is poised to lead the way. When moments throughout our long history have compelled us to transform, we have skillfully balanced tradition and innovation. So, too, have we remained rooted in our foundational values of access, inclusion, service, and deep and abiding relationships that flourish here and beyond.

This was the story of our founding in 1842, when two Lutheran pastors opened a tiny classical preparatory school for boys in Augusta County, Virginia, to provide students of humble means access to classical and scientific education at minimal cost.

It was our story just a few years later, when these founders moved the school's belongings in a single wagon to Salem to increase enrollment and provide educational opportunities to southwest Virginia.

It was our story from the 1880s, when we welcomed Native American students from regional tribes and international students from across the globe so that, by the early 1900s, Roanoke College enrolled more international students than any other college in the South.

Today, we are called to write the next chapter of this remarkable story. Together, we will imagine, create, and become the future of Roanoke College. I invite you to join me.

Imagine... the palpable energy of a dynamic learning laboratory where every corner of the College is connected to and in service to the Roanoke Valley.

Imagine... a colorful tapestry of students (learners)—young and older; veterans and parents; virtual, residential, and commuter; degree- and certification-seeking; international and local—each connected to Roanoke College because they know it is a bright and powerful connector for where they and the world are going.

Imagine... faculty and staff partnering in an environment characterized by *enough*—enough energy and resources, enough expertise and collaboration, and enough imagination to meet the high calling of readying every learner to shape the future for good.

Imagine... Roanoke College graduates donning more hope than debt; great communicators, astute thinkers, and agile contributors able to re-skill, adapt, and transform with the demands and pace required for today and tomorrow.

Because we want a brighter future, a stronger community, and a better world, Roanoke College is embracing constant transformation to be ready to serve the learners of each new day. There is no better investment. This is our history—and this is our future.

It is my honor to introduce you to ***Imagine Roanoke: A Strategic Plan for Roanoke College and the 21st Century Learner.***

With hope,



Frank Shushok, Jr.
President



OUR MISSION

Roanoke College develops students as whole persons and prepares them for responsible lives of learning, service, and leadership by promoting their intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and personal growth.

OUR VISION

We champion potential, providing essential learning and leadership through leading-edge academic programs and transformative educational experiences, giving students the mettle, mastery, and empathy to live lives of purpose, build meaningful careers, and meet our society's most pressing needs.

OUR GOALS

- 1 Foster student success and well-being
- 2 Advance academic innovation and transformative learning experiences
- 3 Cultivate a culture of administrative, financial, and operational excellence
- 4 Champion access, diversity, inclusion, and belonging
- 5 Elevate Roanoke College

OUR COMMITMENTS—WE WILL:

- Be student-ready, student-first
- Provide transformative educational experiences
- Champion access and equity
- Deploy a technology-enhanced and data-driven environment designed for agility
- Foster a human-centered, well-being-oriented work culture
- Develop robust corporate, industry, educational and nonprofit partnerships
- Commit to a lifelong relationship with our alumni
- Act sustainably, operate efficiently, and be known for administrative excellence

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THE PLANNING PROCESS

Work on the new strategic plan began in earnest in October 2023 with a campus-wide “Community Day” where faculty, staff, and students contributed more than 1,300 comments, ideas, and suggestions for the future of Roanoke College.

In January 2024, President Shushok appointed a Strategic Planning Team comprising 22 faculty, staff, students, and trustees to develop a ranked list of specific, actionable, and measurable strategic initiatives anchored by the College’s mission, vision, and five strategic goals. The president posed three key questions to the committee:

- **What do our community and the world need from Roanoke College and our graduates?**
- **What problems can we help solve?**
- **Whom can we serve?**

The Strategic Planning Team began by analyzing and synthesizing the data collected during Community Day. Over the course of spring semester 2024, the team refined and prioritized ideas based on their degree of innovation, distinctiveness, and impact. In April 2024, the planning team presented 18 strategic initiatives to the College’s senior leadership team and the board of trustees for feedback and prioritization.

It is from these initiatives that the following six imperatives emerged, laying a strategic path for the future of Roanoke College. The plan was approved by the board of trustees on August 15, 2024.

THE DESIGN: A LIVING DOCUMENT

Designed to spark imagination and innovation, our six imperatives are intentionally ambitious, calling us to move rapidly to advance new initiatives, partnerships, and ways of thinking, while remaining driven and inspired by a long-term vision that extends beyond the next one, three, or five years. Above all, the imperatives establish a shared vision for how we must think, act, and collaborate to best serve 21st century learners and the region.

Imagine Roanoke is a living document. As we anticipate and help shape the future that exists just over the horizon, we must also be ready to adapt our strategies within an ever-shifting landscape and a practice of continuous evaluation and improvement.

An Imagine Roanoke Leadership Council, appointed by the president, will regularly monitor the plan’s progress, recommend adaptations as conditions warrant, and ensure success. The council will also work with the president and college leadership to provide biannual progress reports and updates to the board of trustees. In addition, the council will lead formal reviews of the plan in years three and six (2028 and 2031), gathering feedback from the community, recommending recalibration as needed, and ensuring that the plan remains aligned with the College’s evolving needs and goals. We anticipate the adoption of a new or revised strategic plan in 2031.

OUR SIX IMPERATIVES FOR THE FUTURE

- 1** To become the Roanoke Valley's most sought-after educational partner by industry, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.
- 2** To develop an on-campus residential experience that is an exemplar of a 21st century learning laboratory—beautiful, integrated, practical, and inspiring.
- 3** To make the exploration of purpose, the pursuit of character, and the graduation of leaders a distinction of a Roanoke College education.
- 4** To be a learner-centric college that orients all aspects of the institution to prioritize the learning and development of learners.
- 5** To cultivate a campus environment that fosters professional growth and supports and empowers every member of the Roanoke College community.
- 6** To create and maintain a culture of philanthropy and responsible financial stewardship.

IMPERATIVE 1

To become the Roanoke Valley’s most sought-after educational partner by industry, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

Roanoke College will move rapidly to:

- **Develop and launch *Roanoke College-Roanoke Valley (RC-RV)*, a partner endeavor to adapt rapidly to business, industry, and learners’ educational needs, offering flexible modalities and access (online, hybrid, weekend, evening, undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs) and differential and affordable cost models (including an accelerated three-year bachelor’s degree).**
- **Form an RC-RV board of advisors comprised of college, industry, and community leaders to foster alignment, provide strategic input, and promote Roanoke College and RC-RV in the region.**
- **Transform the historic Main Street Post Office into the future home of RC-RV.**
- **Re-envision the campus Main Street corridor as a live/learn/work/play hub that integrates Roanoke College with the City of Salem, inviting mixed-use development and creating Roanoke College as a destination for Salem.**



IMPERATIVE 2

To develop an on-campus residential experience that is an exemplar of a 21st century learning laboratory—beautiful, integrated, practical, and inspiring.

Roanoke College will move rapidly to:

- **Launch four transdisciplinary schools and new academic programs to promote integrated learning that inspires and equips learners with both career-ready skills and timeless liberal arts capacities.**
- **Refurbish residence halls and transform these spaces into living-learning environments where learners can discover their gifts and talents, feel that they belong, and extend their learning through informal engagement with faculty, staff, and peers.**
- **Engage every learner in developing a customized educational plan that includes at least two career-related internships or experiential activities (study away, undergraduate research, service-learning), a sustained mentorship, and focused advising from day one to graduation.**
- **Build a full range of learner support services, establish a success center in Fintel Library, and increase retention and graduation rates by 10 percent.**
- **Invest in the campus physical environment to enhance the campus aesthetic with art, consistent branding, storytelling, and accessibility.**



IMPERATIVE 3

To make the exploration of purpose, the pursuit of character, and the graduation of leaders a distinction of a Roanoke College education.

Roanoke College will move rapidly to:

- **Integrate the exploration of purpose, the pursuit of character, and leadership development into the co-curriculum, including NCAA athletic teams and campus offerings.**
- **Solicit the development of an interdisciplinary leadership minor to pursue questions of purpose, develop vocation-specific leadership capacities, and call learners to be people of character.**
- **Hire, train, and support the highest caliber, learner-focused faculty and staff who model a commitment to these traits.**



IMPERATIVE 4

To be a learner-centric college that orients all aspects of the institution to prioritize the learning and development of learners.

Roanoke College will move rapidly to:

- **Recruit and support learners who represent all forms of diversity to create a learning environment that models the world in which our learners will serve.**
- **Simplify bureaucratic procedures, make administrative offices more accessible, and ensure that all interactions are focused on supporting learner needs and success.**
- **Adopt proactive approaches to identify and address learners' needs before they become issues.**
- **Enhance in-class experiences for learners by employing inclusive and adaptive teaching methods, active learning techniques, personalized support, collaborative learning environments, and culturally responsive teaching.**
- **Continuously evaluate and adopt new technological advancements to keep the curriculum relevant and forward-looking, preparing learners for the evolving job market.**
- **Develop experiences, programs, and trainings that equip faculty, staff, and learners to practice civil discourse and celebrate the College's commitment to free speech and ELCA's Rooted and Open.**



IMPERATIVE 5

To cultivate a campus environment that fosters professional growth and supports and empowers every member of the Roanoke College community.

Roanoke College will move rapidly to:

- **Develop a sustainable business model that generates sufficient resources to invest in and renew the College’s spaces and places, to fairly compensate faculty and staff, and to incentivize excellence.**
- **Offer flexibility, wellness resources, and family-friendly policies to help employees manage their personal and professional lives effectively.**
- **Develop a leadership academy to prepare future leaders within the College through targeted training and development opportunities.**
- **Create a fund that provides small, one-time grants to support innovative initiatives that align with the College’s primary goals.**



IMPERATIVE 6

To create and maintain a culture of philanthropy and responsible financial stewardship.

Roanoke College will move rapidly to:

- **Triple the endowment, with particular emphasis on increasing learner scholarships, unrestricted resources and endowed professorships.**
- **Cultivate and celebrate alumni engagement and increase alumni giving participation from 16 to 25 percent.**
- **Cultivate and inspire investment in Roanoke College by members of the local community and among learners and their families.**
- **Be relentless about regular assessments of programs and initiatives funded by the College to measure their effectiveness in supporting the five goals, adjusting based on data-informed insights, as needed.**





STRATEGIC PLANNING COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Pam Cabalka '76 *Trustee*
Elizabeth McClenney *Director of the Library*
Matt Rearick *Associate Professor and Chair, Health & Human Performance*
Brian Reed *Vice President for Student Success*

PLANNING TEAM

Nelson Barre *Associate Professor of Fine Arts*
Ken Belton '81 *Trustee & Chair, Community, Diversity and Inclusion Committee*
John Farmer *Associate Director of Athletics*
Halle Fernstrum '24 *Senior, Data Science*
Terri Fox '90 *Chief Information Officer*
James France *Graphic Designer*
Heather Johnson *Director for Academic Grants and Foundation Relations*
Richard Keithley *Associate Professor of Chemistry and Chair, Faculty Personnel Committee*
Zoe Lampros *Sophomore, Political Science and Vice President, Student Government*
Jennifer McCloud *Associate Professor of Education*
David Mowen *Vice President for Finance and Administration*
Janice Tawney *Principal Gifts Officer*
David Taylor *Assistant Vice President for Academic Operations*
Nicole Terrill '95 *Trustee and Co-Chair, Parent Leadership Council*
Ivonne Wallace Fuentes *Professor of History and Faculty Moderator*

EX-OFFICIO

Malon Courts '92 *Chair, Board of Trustees*
Frank Shushok, Jr. *President*
Kathy Wolfe *Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College*