

## Strategic Plan 2023

### SECTION I: Background

#### **Alignment with TU Strategic Plan**

Towson University is an international university. As of the start of the 2022-23 academic year, we have more than 400 international students from 90 countries. We have more than 40 faculty members from outside of the United States and, following a pause in study abroad caused by the pandemic, we are projected to send as many if not more students abroad in 2023 as we did before the pandemic. TU's international students and scholars, our study abroad participants, and all our faculty and students who engage in international activities enrich and strengthen Towson University.

The university's strategic plan, [TU 2020-2030: Leadership for the Public Good](#), outlines goals that are necessary to achieve in order to fulfill our vision, where "Towson University is a national leader in student-centered education, where students will develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to become ethical leaders in a global society." TU International is poised to play a critical role in advancing the university's vision. The International Initiatives Strategic Plan is designed to identify goals and action items to achieve international objectives that will support and strengthen the university's strategic priorities.

TU's international initiatives directly support TU's key strategic goals to **educate, innovate, engage, include, support, and sustain** our students and faculty.

- Our *Study Abroad and Away* programs provide "exceptional student-centered educational experiences" beyond our campus boundaries.
- Every *English Language Center* student and international student and faculty member served by our *International Student and Scholar Office* helps the university build "an inclusive, collaborative, and equitable community where people from all backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are welcomed, valued and supported to achieve their fullest potential."

TU's international initiatives likewise support the university's diversity strategic plan, [A More Inclusive TU: Advancing Equity and Diversity](#), specifically Goal 1.2, under Education and Scholarship:

- "Increase diversity-rich learning experiences that raise all students' self-awareness and cultural intelligence and increase understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion, while encouraging engagement in the greater community."

This strategic plan will also contribute directly to the University System of Maryland's strategic plan, [Vision 2030: From Excellence to Preeminence](#). Goal 5.7 states:

- "We will have enhanced global engagement "by expanding study abroad programs, supporting international students, and emphasizing international research efforts."

## **Benchmarking and Target Setting**

A key component to each goal in this strategic plan is benchmarking and target setting. We plan to improve and standardize data collection and distribution. Measuring our efforts against pre-pandemic baselines, peer institutions, and sustainable aspirations will allow us to achieve results while measuring progress toward our goals.

## **Resources**

The strategic plan identifies modest resource requirements necessary to meet its goals, to ensure regulatory compliance, mitigate liability and risk, and to ensure student success. Most recognize the need to maintain full and robust staffing in order to serve a growing number of students. As these requirements are tied to growth, they will pay for themselves through increased enrollment, participation, and retention. Others are directly tied to the university's strategic plan or address serious gaps in addressing student needs.

This strategic plan will guide all International Initiatives programming as we work with students, faculty, and staff partners to support everything that TU does internationally to achieve the university's vision.

## **SECTION II: Mission, Vision, and Values**

### **Mission**

The International Initiatives Office supports comprehensive global engagement at Towson University by advocating for the integration of international perspectives into the curriculum, the recruitment of international undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree students, and collaboration of faculty with international partners; serving international students and faculty, students who study abroad and away, and English language learners; supporting a diverse and inclusive campus; and developing a globally competent community.

### **Vision**

We envision a globally engaged Towson University, where students and faculty from the United States and all countries of the world will experience meaningful international learning and research opportunities at home and abroad.

### **Values**

- We believe that **global** learning is integral to a well-rounded college education for all students.
- We believe that **international and intercultural** engagement broadens individual perspectives and strengthens communities.
- We believe that all our activities should be student-centered, and seek to celebrate and advance **diversity, equity, and inclusion** across the university community.

## SECTION III: Strategic Goals

### A. Study Abroad and Away

*Goal:* Increase affordability of study abroad and away opportunities and raise the number and diversity of student participants.

#### *Action items*

1. **Targets** – Set annual goals for all study abroad and away program types (faculty-led, TU In Country, Exchange, Internship, and non-TU programs) and participation based on pre-pandemic baselines and sustainable annual growth.  
  
Timeline: June 15
2. **Marketing** – Develop annual marketing plans to reach target goals for each program type.  
  
Timeline: July 15
3. **Funding** – Request that the TU Institutional Study Abroad Scholarship Fund be expanded to include all study abroad and away students and increased from \$50,000 per year to \$100,000 per year to immediately fulfill TU’s strategic priority; and convene a task force to make further recommendations to increase affordability of study abroad and away.  
  
Timeline: Finalize budget request for scholarships by FY25 budget planning deadline; identify task force members by May 15 to convene meeting in the fall.
4. **Programming Integration** – Work with academic departments and colleges to strategically integrate study abroad and away programming into the curriculum through program design, course mapping, advising, and development and implementation of study abroad and away learning outcomes.  
  
Timeline: Initiate efforts in September 2023

#### *Financial and Resource Implications*

1. A fully staffed Study Abroad & Away Office at pre-pandemic levels of five professional staff plus student employees will be necessary to develop new programs, manage and promote current opportunities, and advise a growing number of students.
2. Additional staffing may be necessary as participation increases.
3. An additional \$50,000 per year in student scholarship funding.

#### *Relationship to TU Strategic Plan*

The study abroad and away goal is taken directly from the TU Strategic Plan. “Increase affordability of study abroad and other experiential learning opportunities and raise the number and diversity of student participants.” (Goal Five: Support) All action items directly support this strategic priority of the university.

Action items also seek to “increase high-impact teaching and learning opportunities to ensure every TU student engages in multiple experiences during their academic career.” (Goal One: Educate)

## **B. International Students**

*Goal:* Provide high quality immigration, cross-cultural, and related services to support student success, retention, and the overall international student experience while working closely with Enrollment Management to increase and diversify TU's international student population.

### *Action Items*

1. **Recruitment** – Partner with Enrollment Management, and other stakeholders, to help develop a strategic international recruitment strategy with scholarship and discount allocations, travel for overseas recruitment, focus countries, and annual enrollment goals for undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree students. Likewise, engage with graduate studies, colleges, and faculty to recruit and support international scholars.

Timeline: July 1

2. **Emergency Fund** – Work with Development and other stakeholders to expand the international student fund to support vulnerable students at risk of withdrawal and/or repatriation due to currency devaluations or other economic and related crises affecting their home regions, countries, or families.

Timeline: Initiate discussions with Development by May 1

3. **Sponsors** – Engage with U.S. and foreign government agencies to increase the number and diversity of sponsored international students.

Timeline: Initiate efforts by May 1, with engagement ongoing

4. **Programming** – Develop an annual cross-departmental programming plan, benchmarked on prior activities, and updated to reflect changing student needs and available on-campus and community resources, to support student engagement, success, and retention.

Timeline: August 1

### *Financial and Resource Implications*

1. Action item one will require the active engagement and support of Enrollment Services and graduate program directors, and an overseas recruitment budget.
2. Action item two will require the active engagement of the Development office and/or an investment to create a fund sufficient enough to support students.
3. A fully staffed International Student and Scholar Office at five professional staff plus student employees is necessary to meet the needs of current and future students, and to ensure university compliance with immigration regulations, adequate advising support, and necessary programming.
4. Additional staffing may be necessary as enrollment increases.

### *Relationship to TU Strategic Plan*

This goal and its action items directly support the following TU strategic priorities:

“Institute and fully support a comprehensive enrollment strategy that achieves the goals of the university with regard to degree programs, diversity, and fiscal outcomes.” (Goal One: Educate)

“Increase diversity-rich learning experiences that raise all students’ self-awareness and ethical and cultural intelligences while advancing their understanding and commitment to TU’s values of inclusion, diversity and equity.” (Goal Four: Include)

“Cultivate a sustainable and inclusive community where all members from all backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are welcomed, valued and supported.” (Diversity Strategic Plan: Campus Climate)

### **C. English Language Center**

*Goal:* Increase English Language Center enrollment so that the center can maintain sustainable self-sufficiency, providing high quality English language instruction to students, offering enrollment opportunities to students without requisite English language proficiency, and contributing to the diversity of TU’s international and overall student population.

#### *Action Items*

1. **Targets** – Set annual goals for enrollment of overseas, local, and sponsored students.  
Timeline: June 15
2. **Pathway** – Implement previously approved Pathway program for students to simultaneously enroll in TU and the ELC.  
Timeline: August 30
3. **Sponsors** – Engage with U.S. and foreign government agencies to increase the number and diversity of sponsored international students enrolled in the English Language Center.  
Timeline: Initiate efforts by May 1, with engagement ongoing.
4. **Integration** – Identify barriers to ELC student integration into the broader university and recommend solutions so that ELC students are more likely to think of themselves as TU students, subsequently enroll in TU, and recommend TU to others.  
Timeline: September 1

#### *Financial and Resource Implications*

1. A fully staffed ELC, including a permanent director, is necessary to provide adequate instruction and service to the current level of students. An office administrator and marketing coordinator will be necessary to recruit, process, and serve a growing number of students.
2. The Pathway program may require additional investments by other units, including admissions and university billing, to adjust systems to meet program requirements.

#### *Relationship to TU Strategic Plan*

The ELC’s language programming in general and the Pathway program in particular contribute directly to the university’s “comprehensive enrollment strategy.” (Goal One: Educate)

Because the ELC’s classrooms are intercultural in nature and include students from a diverse range of national, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, the center provides “diversity-rich learning experiences that raise all students’ self-awareness and ethical and cultural intelligences while advancing their understanding and commitment to TU’s values of inclusion, diversity and equity” (Goal Four: Include)