I started my tenure as Mercyhurst University president in 2015 with the clear understanding that we were in need of renewal. Like so much of private higher education, particularly schools like ours that are rich in the liberal arts, we face the challenge of being true to ourselves while navigating a tumultuous sea of changing demands and expectations.

Throughout our history, we have developed a time-honored and distinctive identity for Mercyhurst University. This past year, we chose to revisit those roots within the framework of today's challenges as we prepared a new strategic plan to guide us through the next three years.

And, so, consistent with my inaugural message, I offer you “Renewal Through the Mercy Mission: The Mercyhurst University Strategic Plan 2018-2020.” As you read through this plan, you'll see that we have taken a pragmatic, business-minded approach aimed at revitalizing our vision of a Mercyhurst education and what it means to deliver it in ways that are sustainable, innovative and meaningful.

We have made a rigorous assessment of our opportunities and challenges and defined them within the context of four key and interconnected strategic goals: Renew our Commitment to a Mercyhurst Education; Renew our Commitment to Campus Life; Renew the University’s Resources, Processes and Infrastructure; and Renew the North East Vision.

Taken together, these goals form a blueprint of the university’s development through the current decade as well as a reminder of the 90-year tradition of learning and teaching of which we are part. For example, when we speak of “ensuring flexible options are in place to make a Mercyhurst education accessible to all types of students,” we are proactively managing our future to align with changing demographics. At the same time, we are renewing our commitment to the legacy of our founding Sisters of Mercy who believed an education should be available to all who seek it.

When we articulate action steps like investing in student housing and improving athletic facilities, we not only aspire to meet the expectations of current and prospective students, but we follow the Mercy tradition of creating an environment that supports development of the whole person.

Through this plan, we will strengthen our education, deliver programs increasingly demanded by students and society, ensure our graduates have the best opportunity for success, and become a model for engagement with the region and world.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the individuals across our community who have contributed their time and talents to this process. I am excited about the future we are charting together.

Michael T. Victor, J.D., LL.D.
President, Mercyhurst University
Such dreams and realities engage every Catholic university. They make a particular appeal to universities founded by the Sisters of Mercy, who have committed their lives and works to serving those who are poor, sick and uneducated. The inspiration expressed in Gaudium et Spes, therefore, lies at the heart of our identity and mission. A Mercyhurst education aims at engaging students for life and at creating leaders in justice and service. In a time of much social change and challenge, this inspiration clarifies our vision of the specific character of our Catholic Mercy University.

Our inspiration leads us to topics of study and engages our perspectives in learning, research and scholarly endeavors. Such inspiration provides the basis of the social-justice dimension of many of our academic and service programs. Indeed, such inspiration directs the goals of our university. We desire to share this inspiration with those who come through our gates, seeking academic excellence, professional expertise, and a future full of hope.
OUR MISSION STATEMENT
Consistent with its Catholic identity and Mercy heritage, Mercyhurst University educates women and men in a culture where faith and reason flourish together, where the beauty and power of the liberal arts combine with an appreciation for the dignity of work and a commitment to serving others. Confident in the strength of its student-faculty bonds, the university community is inspired by the image of students whose choices, in life and work, will enable them to realize the human and spiritual values embedded in everyday realities and to exercise leadership in service toward a just world.

OUR VISION
Mercyhurst University seeks to be a leading higher educational institution that integrates excellence in the liberal arts, professional and career-path programs, and service to regional and world communities.

OUR CORE VALUES
We are:

Socially merciful
Mercy restores human dignity, expands our social relations and empowers us to reach out in compassion to others.

Globally responsible
Globalization challenges us to learn how to steward the resources of the Earth wisely and to act in solidarity with its diverse peoples.

Compassionately hospitable
Mercy hospitality begins with self-acceptance, welcomes peoples of different faith, ethnic and cultural traditions, and thus builds communities that transcend mere tolerance.

Intellectually creative
Generous, inquiring and critical habits of mind, which support the aspirations for excellence manifested within the academic community, encourage us in our lifelong search for what is true, good and beautiful.

Reflectively aware
Our Christian environment encourages self-reflection and contemplation of human behavior, promotes balance of mind, body and spirit, and ultimately offers the opportunity to develop a moral compass for a life of integrity.

Ambassadors of service.
Our Strategic Plan will be advanced through the realization of four specific goals identified as essential to furthering our mission. These goals were developed as a result of a comprehensive evaluation of our shared values, vision and mission. An internal and external Environmental Scan was conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the university while also discovering opportunities and challenges that influence our competitive position.

GOAL 1: RENEW OUR COMMITMENT TO A MERCYHURST EDUCATION

Deliver a Mercyhurst education that provides students with a distinct and transformative academic experience in preparation for personal and career success while empowering them with the knowledge and attitudes to lead fulfilling, civically engaged lives.

STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

1.1 Develop and maintain innovative academic programs that meet the needs of the global economic climate based on appropriate assessment and research

- Develop associate, baccalaureate and graduate academic programs including data science, computer science and cyber
- Develop and grow new and existing signature programs in each of the four colleges
- Expand collaboration with community partners for program development and external funding opportunities
- Renew our commitment to academic programs that address environmental sustainability

1.2 Make a Mercyhurst education accessible to students from all backgrounds by improving programming for non-traditional students

- Expand current programming to meet the needs of adult non-traditional students including veterans
- Expand articulation agreements in Erie and North East with other institutions in the regional area
- Expand online and blended course offerings
- Explore the possibility of developing an autism program at the North East campus

1.3 Develop stronger connections across campuses to enhance educational opportunities for students

- Expand 2+2 programs between Erie and North East
- Develop and expand Beyond the Gates, study abroad/away and iMU programs to enhance learning opportunities for North East students
- Improve and streamline the transfer process from North East to Erie and Erie to North East
- Implement processes to build stronger ties between Erie and North East academic departments for collaboration and program development
1.4 Provide students with a transformational education grounded in the liberal arts tradition

- Reinforce our commitment to the liberal arts through continued refinement of the REACH Curriculum
- Provide challenging and forward-thinking experiential learning opportunities
- Effectively use assessment data to strengthen our focus on student resilience and development of the whole person in the classroom

1.5 Enhance academic systems and processes that support research-informed teaching in every department across campus

- Implement processes and efficiencies that allow us to stabilize course selection and class size in support of our commitment to positive faculty-student bonds
- Develop academic policies and programming to promote faculty development and scholarship to enhance the classroom experience
- Use the results of assessment activities to continue to enhance student learning

GOAL 2: RENEW OUR COMMITMENT TO CAMPUS LIFE

Consistent with the Mercy tradition of whole-person development, provide students with an environment that supports intellectual growth as well as spiritual, professional and personal wellbeing.

STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

2.1 Improve campus facilities to enhance the quality of life for our students

- Invest in a new sophomore residence hall in Erie
- Develop a plan to address the deferred maintenance issues of existing residential facilities
- Increase availability of accessible housing options for students requesting accommodation
- Invest in improvement of athletic facilities (gym floor/turf/rec center) in Erie and North East to better serve student athletes and to comply with best practices
- Upgrade post office and printing services
- Update existing policies and procedures regarding student accommodations and accessibility

2.2 Strengthen services for students to support student success

- Revitalize the career services area in Erie and North East to better serve the students
- Provide students and advisors with tools that encourage on-time graduation and support advising efforts
- Increase the awareness of student services that are available to international students, internal transfers (from North East) and graduate students
- Develop and implement a plan that will improve student health outcomes
- Increase the availability of student services to international and out-of-state students over the university break periods to include recreation hours, dining hours, transportation services and programs
- Implement processes to build stronger ties between Erie and North East administrative and student services departments for coordination and efficiency
2.3 Transform the campus climate to support a diverse and inclusive culture

- Create strategies for training our community in cultural sensitivity skills
- Enhance hiring practices that support recruiting faculty and staff of different racial and cultural backgrounds
- Strengthen mechanisms for reporting and recording incidents of concern
- Build an inclusive campus environment through curriculum, programs and experiences
- Create specific orientation programs for non-traditional students (e.g., international and transfer students)

GOAL 3: RENEW THE UNIVERSITY’S RESOURCES, PROCESSES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Develop practices that ensure financial viability, improve operational efficiencies, improve facilities, promote environmental sustainability, preserve the beauty of our campuses and support the members of our community.

STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

3.1 Provide the physical resources necessary to support the university’s overall working and learning environment in Erie and North East

- Complete a University Campus Master Plan
- Develop a deferred and preventative maintenance plan
- Conduct a space utilization study
- Evaluate curricular and co-curricular program funding to ensure optimal allocation of resources

3.2 Improve operational efficiencies including systems, processes and accessibility to data in Erie and North East

- Implement training tools and resources to ensure employees have the skills to use the university systems effectively and efficiently
- Enhance use of data and analytics through the continued rollout of administrative and reporting solutions to support critical institutional outcomes
- Utilize technology to improve administrative services and communications
- Improve operational efficiency through adoption of document management solutions throughout all administrative offices

3.3 Generate diversified revenue streams through fundraising, grants and summer programming

- Increase revenue from private sources by engaging alumni, friends and corporate partners to expand support for the university, including through a targeted capital campaign
- Create a central office for grants and contracts to increase funding from federal and state agencies, corporations, and foundations
- Expand summer programming (camps, conferences, etc.) to utilize summer resources
3.4 Achieve optimal net revenue per student

- Benchmark net tuition revenue with schools in our competitive environment
- Determine the optimal net tuition revenue per student to support the university’s goals
- Reverse the trend of the increasing discount for the traditional Erie freshman population to better achieve net tuition revenue goals
- Identify and begin to move into tertiary markets, with the anticipation of market changes in New York state as a result of the new “free” college program
- Assess the financial aid spending for specific populations and evaluate in terms of ROI and student success

3.5 Develop a more supportive and productive work environment to enhance the contributions of our faculty and staff

- Enhance human resources operations to support professional development opportunities and wellness of faculty and staff
- Complete compensation studies for faculty and staff; develop and implement fair, comprehensive compensation policies and practices

3.6 Strengthen the safety of the Mercyhurst community through investment in security resources and increased training

- Expand emergency response training and resources for students and employees on Erie and North East campuses
- Develop a plan to assess and upgrade the current security camera system

GOAL 4: RENEW THE MERCYHURST NORTH EAST VISION

Expand North East beyond its present model of a 2-year local opportunity college to a regional college that includes the ability to begin 4-year programs and the addition of new programs that provide in-demand jobs and fit the short and intensive skills acquisition model.

STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

4.1 Enrich the academic experience through innovative programming, expanded educational opportunities and closer working relationships between campuses

- Develop academic programming including business and technology and cyber
- Expand summer academic programming in North East to capitalize on summer revenue opportunities
- Expand 2+2 programs between Erie and North East
- Expand articulation agreements with other institutions in the area
- Explore the feasibility to develop an autism program at North East
- Improve and streamline the transfer process from North East to Erie
- Implement processes to build stronger ties between Erie and North East academic departments for collaboration and program development
4.2 Enhance campus amenities to meet the needs of both residential and commuter students

- Invest in improvement of athletic facilities
- Revitalize the career services to better serve the students
- Invest in athletic training services to better serve student athletes
- Continue to commit resources to deferred maintenance
- Complete a Campus Master Plan for the North East campus
- Implement a “Women with Children” residential program
- Establish a North East alumni organization

4.3 Improve operational efficiency and effectiveness of resources to support the growth of the North East campus

- Improve operational efficiencies including systems, processes, resources and accessibility to data
- Expand new student recruitment efforts beyond Erie County