

Strengthening 21st Century Liberal Arts Institutions Through Collaboration
Strategic Plan for the Great Lakes Colleges Association (2022-2028)

Together we will define the future of residential liberal arts education by developing and supporting faculty and staff as institutional citizens and by offering opportunities that successfully launch students into rewarding careers.

Since our founding in 1962, the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) has been an agent of change, acting to strengthen member institutions and exemplifying the power of education in the tradition of the liberal arts. The GLCA has enhanced the careers of thousands of faculty and staff through programs of pedagogy and learning, leadership development, and support for communities of color and women. The start of our seventh decade has seen remarkable change in higher education and in society, creating greater urgency and new opportunities for collaborative actions that serve the GLCA's colleges and advance today's liberal arts education.

Through the goals and associated actions set forth in this plan, we will confirm our national leadership as together we envision what a 21st century residential liberal arts education could be. The GLCA will apply its decades of experience and expertise to enhance existing programming and adopt new approaches to ensure the ongoing vitality and excellence of our members. Central to these efforts will be creating collaborative spaces to discuss common challenges, question conventional thinking, explore promising opportunities, and pilot innovative solutions.

We focus our work in the following key areas:

Student success is at the heart of the residential liberal arts mission. Collaborating to enhance career pathways will benefit our students, strengthen our schools, and provide a compelling public narrative about the value of a liberal arts education.

A 21st century liberal arts college requires faculty and staff who see themselves as institutional citizens vested in and contributing to the institution's success. Expanded faculty and staff development, coupled with supporting communities of practice, will develop leadership potential in the context of deeper understanding of how our institutions must function to be successful in a changing higher education landscape.

Recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, staff, and students is essential to the future of member campuses. In all that GLCA does, we strive to provide equity in access to all opportunities and to foster environments in which all thrive personally and professionally.

The GLCA will continue to carry out a number of activities in support of member campuses. We will foster convening groups that provide community and share ideas for staff across campuses. We will support the Global Liberal Arts Alliance which connects the GLCA with liberal arts institutions abroad and provides targeted internationalization opportunities for faculty and students. We will provide comparative data, promote the Recognized Programs of off-campus study, and support programs like the Students of Color Leadership Conference, the New Writers Award, and occasional summits on timely and critical topics. We will close out the Mellon Global Crossroads initiative. However, through 2028, our strategic focus will be on enhancing aspects of GLCA work that are crucial to the health of member institutions. Consequently, the following goals will be our priority.

The GLCA will enhance our Academic Leadership and Innovation (GALI) series as a GLCA signature program that develops faculty and staff in their roles as institutional stewards who can provide leadership around key institutional issues.

- Target campus constituents such as department chairs, pre-tenure faculty, mid-career women faculty, faculty and staff of color, and early career staff and administrators.
- Address leadership development, issues of institutional significance, and constituent-specific topics.
- Offer GALIs in different modalities: in-person, virtual, and hybrid.
- Explore approaches that lend themselves to innovative thinking (e.g., think tank, fellows program).

The GLCA will develop relationships with employers to expand mentored internship experiences and early career opportunities for GLCA students.

- Leverage our collective size and geography to target employers that would otherwise be difficult for individual institutions to engage.
- Work in collaboration with campuses, faculty, and staff to ensure students are prepared for the future of work and are able to articulate their liberal arts outcomes and related skills to potential employers.
- Ensure equity of access to these opportunities.

The GLCA will strengthen and elevate the Tuition Remission Exchange (TRE) Program to yield optimal benefit to our institutions and their employees, providing leverage in recruiting and retaining the most talented and diverse employee base.

- Explore expansion of opportunities and possible changes in the financial model.
- Ensure continued balance between the benefit to an employee and the benefit/cost to GLCA institutions.