GOLD(EN) BLUEPRINT:
CONSTRUCTING REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

- STRONG ACADEMICS
- STUDENT SUCCESS
- HIRED
- Fiscally Sound
- COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
- EMPLOYEE INVESTMENTS
- LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL
- Active Listener
- Strong Work Ethic
- Strong Organizational Skills

2021 - 2025
President’s Message

It is important for institutions, even those like Johnson C. Smith University, which have been in existence for over 150 years, to reflect on their strengths and the opportunities available to them as they develop plans for the future. Sometimes those plans are the result of purely introspective examinations; sometimes those plans are the result of existential circumstances; and many times those plans are a combination of both.

When we began this strategic planning effort, the world was a different place than it has become upon the conclusion of our planning process. We have undertaken intensive introspective examinations of ourselves, while at the same time, making sure that we do not lose sight of the incredible opportunities that are available to institutions like Johnson C. Smith University because of the significant changes that have recently affected our region, the country and the world.

Johnson C. Smith University, located in Charlotte, North Carolina, as the city’s only Historically Black College and University (HBCU), is uniquely positioned to take advantage of its inherent strengths as well as the increased interest in supporting HBCUs nationally and regionally. This strategic planning effort has resulted in a blueprint that, if executed with fidelity, will produce results of student success that we expect to be considered “revolutionary” and will honor the most significant words of the University’s alma mater, “Hold high the Gold and Blue.” Hence, we have named this strategic plan: “The Gold(en) Blueprint: Constructing Revolutionary Change.”

Change is not always easy, but it is necessary if we are to evolve and compete in a rapidly changing higher education landscape. This plan, which will guide the work of every JCSU employee, provides a clear vision for the future of JCSU as a thriving institution that transforms the lives of our students, drives the growth and prosperity of the Historic West End, and contributes to Charlotte’s knowledgeable, highly-skilled and creative workforce.

I am proud of the work that has been done over the past year by our trustees, faculty, staff, students and community partners to develop this strategic plan. Even though most of our work was done virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the dedication of those who served on the committees charged with assessing every aspect of the University never wavered. The future of Johnson C. Smith University is bright. I am confident that The Gold(en) Blueprint will result in an institution that is not merely surviving, but is thriving by every measure of student success in the 21st Century!

Sincerely,

Clarence D. Armbrister, J.D.
President
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History

Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) has a rich history and is heralded as one of the best small colleges in the nation, serving more than 1,200 students and employing more than 240 full-time faculty members, administrators and staff.

Biddle Memorial Institute, JCSU’s original name, was founded in 1867 by Rev. S.C. Alexander and the Rev. W. L. Miller. It was named after Civil War Union Army Capt. Henry J. Biddle, the late husband of benefactor Mary D. Biddle, and was renamed Johnson C. Smith University in 1923 to honor the generous donation of Jane Berry Smith in memory of her late husband. JCSU holds in its archives a sword belonging to Capt. Biddle, who was a member of the staff of Gen. George McCall. In 1867, Colonel William R. Myers, an officer in the Confederacy, gave eight acres of farmland on Beatties Ford Road west of downtown to Biddle University.

In 1924, the University was recognized as a four-year college by the North Carolina State Board of Education, and that same year was named one of the first beneficiaries of The Duke Endowment. JCSU began admitting women in 1932 (becoming fully coeducational in 1941), and in 1938 attained the status of an independent college, affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, reporting to the General Assembly through the Board of Christian Education.

Now under the leadership of its 14th president, Clarence D. Armbrister, J.D., JCSU continues to fulfill its promise to produce graduates who can communicate effectively, think critically, learn independently and collaboratively and demonstrate excellence in their chosen career fields.
Points of Pride

• #1 private HBCU in North Carolina – U.S. News & World Report
• #1 small college in North Carolina for placing graduates in jobs – Zippia
• #9 Best Online Colleges in North Carolina – SR Education Group
• #17 Sport Management Program – Niche

$12.7 million in pledges and donations in 2019-2020 (32% increase over 2018-2019)
• 3 HBCUgrow LEAD Awards (2020): Marketing, Innovation and Military-Friendly
• 2nd place finish at Black Enterprise’s 2019 Smart Hackathon
• 2 JCSU students selected to attend 2019 Forbes Under 30 Summit

Numbers at a glance*

1,306 Total Students

37% In-State

63% Out-Of-State

*As of fall 2020
Including U.S. territories
**Vision**

Johnson C. Smith University will prioritize academic excellence and be recognized as a premier professional liberal arts HBCU, providing students with high-quality academic, social, personal, professional and spiritual learning experiences that lead to individual growth and development, a strong sense of community and purpose and top career outcomes.

**Mission**

Rooted in legacy and tradition, Johnson C. Smith University endeavors to provide a multicultural and transformative experience, which educates, prepares, and graduates a diverse group of talented and highly motivated students who can communicate effectively, think critically and learn independently as well as collaboratively. Further, JCSU cultivates an inclusive environment in which students are equipped to be global citizens who develop a compelling sense of social and civic responsibility for leadership and service.
The Gold(en) Blueprint evolved from a process that is reflected in the diagram below. It is instructive not only for how the University arrived at the fundamental elements/pillars of the strategic plan, but it is valuable reminder of the structural underpinnings of JCSU’s strategic direction.

When we began the strategic planning process in January 2020, we initially contemplated that it would involve a two-step process: Step 1 – scenario planning and Step 2 – development of the strategic plan by a steering committee representing a broad group of trustees, faculty, staff, a student and external community partners.

For step 1 of the process a group of trustees and outside external parties spent a weekend giving thought to possible future scenarios in higher education, including the effects of demographic changes, modes of delivery and the rising costs of education. The group was not tasked with planning for a specific future scenario, but was tasked to think about an institution that would be flexible and nimble enough to survive any scenario that might become a reality into the future. Little did anyone know at the time that the world was about to be subjected to a world-wide pandemic that would affect every facet of life for the next two years and beyond.

As we moved to Step 2 of the process, the Steering Committee began the work of completing an environmental scan of not only higher education, but of JCSU. These early discussions revealed, among other things, a concern about the ability of JCSU to reach its aspirational strategic vision in the absence of addressing certain fundamental operational challenges of the University. These issues were of sufficient prominence, and of concern especially to faculty members of the Steering Committee, that we took the time to identify and understand the concerns being raised.

These concerns/issues are reflected in the diagram below as “Operational Clarity” and form the foundation of much of the later work of the Steering Committee which followed. In addition to identifying the issues that required operational clarity, the Steering Committee began the important work of developing the Longer Term Vision for the University and much of the Steering Committee’s work is reflected in the elements of the strategic plan’s Mission, Vision and Core Values.

As work continued on the development of the strategic plan, a Board Select Committee was established to assist in moving the plan’s development to its pinnacle and stated goal—establishment of a strategic vision for the long term future of the institution. A secondary, but as important a goal, was to ensure that the strategic vision could be supported and sustained if provided the appropriate resources. Working with a consultant, the Board Select Committee built upon the foundational work of the Steering Committee and developed a “business case” for the strategic vision that is integral to the strategic plan. The four pillars of the “business case” have been tested among business and philanthropic leaders of the region and serve as the foundation of the strategic plan.
Core Values

Integrity
We hold ourselves accountable and strive to do what is right and best in its totality for our students and all other constituents.

Student-Centeredness
We are committed to the well-being of the whole student across the campus environment—providing academic, personal and professional support to the drive students’ collective and individual growth and aspirations while respecting their interests, abilities and cultural identities.

Service
We provide the highest level of regard to all constituents, while remaining flexible and responsive as we deliver programs and support services. We provide an environment that promotes accountability, innovation, collaboration, shared resources, expertise and opinions for the good of the University and its stakeholders.

Financial Sustainability
We maintain a healthy financial position to fuel operational advancement in the present and to lay foundations for our future.

Excellence
We build a place for the creation, preservation and transmission of knowledge through innovation, research, intellectual rigor and diverse modes of teaching.

Inclusivity and Equity
We take pride in our role in advancing cultural competencies, diversity, equality and equity for all.

Respect for Institutional Legacy
We take pride in advancing the legacy of our African American traditions and communities, and embrace our HBCU history, locally and globally.
Strategic Initiative Pillar 1: Academic Innovation
Deliver signature academic programs aligned to local and regional market demand.

Strategic Initiative Pillar 2: Strong Professional Outcomes
Become a critical higher education partner to employers in the Charlotte area and beyond.

Embedded within the foundation of Historic Biddle Hall is our Motto: “Sit Lux.”
Strategic Initiative Pillar 3: Seamless Pathways for Students
Develop deeper academic partnerships that create seamless pathways for students.

Strategic Initiative Pillar 4: Cohesive Retention Strategy
Implement a cohesive retention strategy to drive greater student engagement and improve student outcomes.
Goals

Goal 1: Strengthen Academic Excellence

Goal 2: Enhance Student Success

Goal 3: Expand Partnerships and Community Engagement

Goal 4: Optimize Financial and Operational Performance

Goal 5: Advance Talent
Goal 1: Strengthen Academic Excellence

We will promote innovative and rigorous pedagogy and invest in our programs and our faculty. Academic excellence will come through the recruitment, retention, and supported innovation of faculty and through continual assessment, which will strengthen and grow our key programs. We will develop programming that reflects the needs of our communities, both now and in the future. Most importantly, our programming will attract future generations of students and work toward fostering their academic and professional growth to prepare them for successful careers.

- **Objective 1.1**: Develop new, signature academic programs that meet the evolving needs of the Charlotte market and beyond and draw the interest of current and future students.
- **Objective 1.2**: Ensure relevance of academic programs through ongoing curriculum development and program review.
- **Objective 1.3**: Enhance the experience of offerings across the curricula to better meet students’ needs.
- **Objective 1.4**: Integrate career exploration and support and experiential learning into all academic curricula to help.
- **Objective 1.5**: Ensure students complete their programs with strong writing, communication, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, digital skills and technical skills from appropriately rigorous courses and programs.
- **Objective 1.6**: Strengthen and align academic advisement across campus to guide students in academic course planning and requirement completion.
- **Objective 1.7**: Advance faculty excellence in teaching and research/scholarship.
Implementation Strategy Framework

Goal 1: Strengthen Academic Excellence

Objective 1.1
Strategies
A. Establish three outstanding academic offerings that will attract students and families and that align with in-demand job market needs, with an emphasis on: (1) Business-Finance major; (2) Pre-Medical/Pre-Health Professionals program; and (3) Data Analytics major.
B. Develop new curricula and programs.
C. Attain and maintain accreditations and national recognition for relevant programs.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Number or percentage of new academic programs developed by program interest and declared majors
- National rankings of new programs

Objective 1.2
Strategies
A. Maintain ongoing curriculum development and program review.
B. Institute, track, and hold academic departments accountable for measurable metrics/outcomes.
C. Attain and maintain accreditations and national recognition for relevant programs.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- National rankings of current programs

Objective 1.3
Strategies
A. Improve coherence and progression of content for all academic programs.
B. Support and invest in learning opportunities for students through innovative instructional models.
C. Provide increased support for programs that address student preparedness.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Student ratings from course evaluations
- Student satisfaction with academics – overall and by program
- Faculty performance review
- Graduate pathways student acceptance rate
- Graduate pathways program utilization
- Graduate pathways satisfaction – students and partners

Objective 1.4
Strategies
A. Launch an integrated career exploration curriculum for all students, beginning in their first year through graduation.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Percentage of courses with career development Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) met and/or exceeded

Objective 1.5
Strategies
A. Emphasize university-wide student learning outcomes through liberal studies and major programs.
B. Employ ongoing course and program assessment and curriculum mapping to continuously revise curricula and strengthen student learning outcomes.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Percentage of courses/programs with SLOs focused on intellectual and practical skills practiced extensively
- Percentage of graduates with intellectual and practical skills Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) met and/or exceeded

Objective 1.6
Strategies
A. Enrich cohort-centered experiences for students, which incorporate advising and learning skills development.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Percentage of instructional full-time faculty with terminal degrees at the start of a given academic year
- Total value of governmental and private grants won, within the past 12 months, at the start of a given academic year by faculty
- Percentage of instructional full-time faculty who have been published in an academic and/or discipline-specific, peer-reviewed, journal within the past 12 months
- Overall mean score rating of the quality of instruction in courses as it contributes to student learning

Objective 1.7
Strategies
A. Recruit, hire, mentor and retain highly qualified faculty who are committed to teaching excellence, contributing to their academic disciplines and connecting their research to the development, engagement and success of students.
B. Embed and support high-impact pedagogical practices to promote learning.
C. Increase faculty professional development opportunities.
D. Enhance support for grantsmanship and research/scholarship.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Advisor rating of student performance
- Student and advisor rating of specific aspect of academic process
Goal 2: Enhance Student Success

We will deliver on our promise by supporting our students’ academic, social, personal, professional and spiritual needs and by embracing their accomplishments as the primary focus of the University. We aim to optimize enrollment through purpose-driven recruitment efforts and improve retention supports that will expand enrollment of our target populations as well as ensure their successful progression through the institution and into fulfilling careers. We will be intentional in ensuring that all enrollment efforts are accompanied by adequate academic and student support services to provide all students with a holistic, high-quality collegiate experience.

• **Objective 2.1**: Recruit students and provide opportunities for exploration of programs of interest that align with the University’s centers of excellence.

• **Objective 2.2**: Improve student persistence and on-time degree completion.

• **Objective 2.3**: Build and strengthen university-wide academic programming and student support services that address the total well-being of students.

• **Objective 2.4**: Develop and integrate opportunities for professional and postgraduate development across the academy.
Implementation Strategy Framework
Goal #2: Enhance Student Success

Objective 2.1
Strategies
A. Develop a dynamic five-year enrollment projection for all target populations.
B. Evaluate new markets that are aligned with the University’s mission and academic program growth.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Freshmen yield rate by program interest
- Transfer yield rate by program interest

Objective 2.2
Strategies
A. Launch robust academic and student support services that are accessible to all students and fully integrated into campus life to improve retention rates, graduation rates, and other academic and professional student outcomes.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Student academic performance by type and program

Objective 2.3
Strategies
A. Employ vigorous student services that support students’ holistic development and their personal, professional, academic, and social needs.
B. Create student pathways by optimizing course scheduling.
C. Increase the capacity of the Career Center to support students’ professional development and career programs across all academic program disciplines.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Percentage of programs and services with Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) focused on student well-being
- Student rating of programming and services provided

Objective 2.4
Strategies
A. Implement graduation requirements that incorporate in-demand professional skills and key industry-specific certifications.
B. Guarantee students access to experiential learning opportunities (e.g., internships, seminars, research projects, community service projects).
C. Increase the capacity of the Career Center to support students’ professional development and career programs across all academic program disciplines.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Number of career-related opportunities by type and frequency
- Percentage of students utilizing career services by type of service
- Internship placement rate
- Licensure and credentialing examination passing rate
- Employment rate
- Graduate school acceptance rate
Goal 3: Expand Partnerships and Community Engagement

We will develop and expand dynamic, mutually beneficial corporate, civic and community partnerships that validate the University’s position in driving the future of Charlotte and surrounding areas, creating impactful collaborations that support students’ academic, social, personal, and professional needs and strengthen professional outcomes. Students succeed when we devote our energies to continuously improving their experiences at the institution, both in and out of the classroom, and expanding their access to enriching academic and professional experiences outside of the University and pathways to post-graduate opportunities and careers.

- **Objective 3.1**: Expand strategic alliances with alumni and external stakeholders to strengthen engagement with the University.
- **Objective 3.2**: Create innovative partnerships with other learning institutions to promote student success and external growth opportunities.
- **Objective 3.3**: Ensure continued positive relationships with established partners.
- **Objective 3.4**: Expand industry and corporate partnerships.
- **Objective 3.5**: Enhance and expand advancement opportunities for the institution.
Implementation Strategy Framework
Goal #3: Expand Partnerships and Community Engagement

Objective 3.1
Strate(gies)
A. Create and develop an entity focused on securing resources for completion of the University’s mission (Foundation).
B. Increase Alumni volunteerism to support on-campus programs.
C. Enhance apparatus to strengthen gifts prospecting / alumni major gifts leads.
D. Introduce a coordinating function (e.g., the Office of Student Success) to align student support services across the University and build and enhance corporate and civic partnerships.
E. Develop a comprehensive, and strategic, data-driven admission plan that demonstrates the collaboration of internal and external constituencies.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Number or percentage of strategic alliances by group type
- Number or percentage of strategic alliances by level of engagement

Objective 3.2
Strate(gies)
A. Establish affiliations with local community colleges to create academic pathways into the University.
B. Develop partnerships with other four-year higher education institutions to support dual-degree programs and other graduate pathways for JCSU students in high-demand disciplines.
C. Create and develop external partnerships and dual-enrollment opportunities with K-12 education-affiliated organizations and local high schools and school systems.
D. Explore academic consortia agreements, shared service agreements, or other contractual partnerships with peer four-year institutions to strengthen the University’s academic programs in key high-demand areas or in complementary disciplines.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Number or percentage of continued partnerships
- Partner rating of relationship with University

Objective 3.3
Strate(gies)
A. Engage in a major capital campaign to advance physical and technological infrastructure and resource enhancements.
B. Reinvest in planned solicitations and mailings.
C. Renew and expand Annual Fund focus area.
D. Enhance Board of Visitors and elevate their engagement to support their work as champions of the University.
E. Create connections and engagement opportunities for corporate partners and alumni to work collaboratively for JCSU.
F. Increase grants in support of programmatic objectives.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Number or percentage of alumni engaged
- Number or percentage of alumni giving
- Extent of brand awareness in communities served [earned media and web interactions]
- Fundraising growth by focus area
- Donor retention rate
- Donor acquisition
- Constituent giving
Goal 4: Optimize Financial and Operational Performance

We will pursue more transparent, inclusive, and efficient financial operational practices and maintain standards that promote and encourage excellence throughout the University's operations. We will commit to a performance-metrics based model to integrate institutional effectiveness as a core component of the University's long-term vitality. We will approach fundraising and stewardship of financial resources with a strong, strategic focus that directly impacts key University priorities and long-term sustainable objectives. We will make major investments in our campus' physical, technological and data collection and analysis infrastructure to produce a 21st Century and beyond learning epicenter that enhances student, faculty and staff experiences.

- Objective 4.1: Strengthen financial competencies, efficiencies and infrastructure.
- Objective 4.2: Increase transparency of budgeting decisions and planning.
- Objective 4.3: Increase unrestricted funding.
- Objective 4.4: Build a campus-wide data architecture, guiding the institution towards making data-informed decisions.
- Objective 4.5: Strengthen processes and procedures at all levels of the institution for operational efficiency and academic effectiveness.
- Objective 4.6: Develop and implement a facilities plan that elevates University and community needs.
Implementation Strategy Framework
Goal #4: Optimize Financial and Operational Performance

Objective 4.1
Strategies
A. Implement a comprehensive financial aid strategy.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Revenues by source and FTE
- Expenses by functional and natural classification
- Change in net assets
- Number and amount of scholarships and fellowships by type
- Value of endowment net assets at the end of the fiscal year
- Financial health (FIT score)

Objective 4.2
Strategies
A. Ensure quality and efficiency in all University operations by implementing baseline budgeting focused on strategic initiatives.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Annual budget
- Operating cash flow

Objective 4.3
Strategies
A. Increase Annual Fund Gifts, target JCSU Fund & Gap Scholarship Fund.
B. Grow the number and dollar amount of corporate gifts.
C. Create awareness and knowledge of the needs/vision of the University.
D. Push donations to scholarships/off-set unfunded aid.
E. Foundation Board – Create awareness for “new” donors at every level.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Amount and percentage increase of unrestricted funds

Objective 4.4
Strategies
A. Support retention strategies and initiatives by rigorous data collection and analytics to understand the key reasons why students leave the University.
B. Utilize Data Governance Council to create framework and policies for data collection, management, storage, retrieval, analyses, and reporting.
C. Identify division/subdivision/college-level key performance metrics, to include disaggregation factors.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Data time-to-value
- Error ratio
- Percentage of gaps in the data set
- User accessibility ratio

Objective 4.5
Strategies
A. Specify unit function and outline operational processes and procedures.
B. Develop data flowcharts for each data process.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Number of findings on institutional audits

Objective 4.6
Strategies
A. Build and renovate student spaces to create competitive amenities to attract and retain students and impact learning and development.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Percentage of routine, preventative, and deferred maintenance
- Space utilization
- Faculty, staff, and student ratings of adequacy physical facilities
- Faculty, staff and student ratings of adequacy technical infrastructure
- Annual capital budget
Goal 5: Advance Talent

We will develop a talent strategy that will provide direction for how the institution will attract, develop, retain, train, support and inspire employees. We will embed the talent strategy into the overall strategic planning process, integrating individual programs and practices to ensure they are all driving toward the same set of objectives.

- **Objective 5.1**: Implement strategic hiring and promotion practices.
- **Objective 5.2**: Preserve and enhance the talent pool.
- **Objective 5.3**: Strengthen employee value proposition.
Implementation Strategy Framework

Goal #5: Advance Talent

Objective 5.1
Strate(gies)
A. Implement HR technology software and strategies to attract, recruit, hire, develop and retain a highly talented workforce to accomplish the goals and objectives of the University.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Number or percentage of hires by source
- Time to fill
- Cost to hire
- Time to hire

Objective 5.2
Strate(gies)
A. Create meaningful career pathways and other practices to drive employee engagement and strengthen culture.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Percentage of high-potential talent

Objective 5.3
Strate(gies)
A. Develop a compensation philosophy and policy to guide revisions to the compensation system.
B. Conduct a compensation benchmarking study.
C. Review, revise and disseminate policies relating to performance management.
D. Support the Executive Cabinet in developing a communication plan to communicate goals and mission to stakeholders at the completion of the Strategic Plan.

Key Performance Indicator(s)
- Percentage of faculty and staff salaries at or above CUPA median
- Number or percentage of training and professional development opportunities by type
- Employee satisfaction
- Supervisor rating of employee performance
Steering Committee Members

Strategic Planning Steering Committee

- Vice Chair Kevin Henry
- Trustee Patty Morton
- Trustee John Stedman
- Trustee Michael Jones
- Dr. Matthew DeForrest
- Dr. Tiffanie Turner-Henderson
- Dr. Helen Caldwell
- Dr. Tekla Johnson
- Sharell Cannady
- Dr. Cathy Jones
- David Julian
- Kellan Louis
- Sierra Raysor
- Anthony S. Edwards
- Dr. Lucinda Blue
- Dr. Felisia Stukes
- Danielle Frazier, Charlotte Works
- Teddy McDaniel, Urban League

Board Select Steering Committee

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- Chair Shirley J. Hughes
- Vice Chair Kevin Henry
- Trustee Steven Boyd
- Trustee Michael Jones
- Trustee Michelle Lee
- Trustee John Stedman
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