



# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2024 - 2025

## President's Message

Ridgewater College provides quality liberal arts, technical, customized training and continuing education opportunities for diverse student learners in an inclusive and supportive environment. More than 4,200 students are served on two campuses and through online learning offerings; in addition, continuing education and training is provided to approximately 10,000 community members.

Our initial planning process in Spring 2019 included extensive dialogue between our strategic planning consultants and the college's administration, faculty, staff, students and community stakeholders that produced a wealth of information about what we are already doing well, what could be improved, and what we must do that is new and different to strengthen the college. The 2019 Strategic Plan developed through that collective effort identified five strategic initiatives for the College – while we have made great progress on those initiatives, they continue to be the primary focus for the College going forward.

As a result, we are employing an annual process of review and modification of our Strategic Plan, building on past work and success and introducing new goals and initiatives as needed to keep the plan current and future oriented. This approach will maintain a foundation for our planning work and allow us address new challenges and make the most of new opportunities, while embracing one of the greatest strengths of Ridgewater – the shared passion of our faculty and staff to serve our students and the people and communities in our region!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Craig Johnson" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

*Craig Johnson*  
President, Ridgewater College

## **Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles**

### *Vision*

Ridgewater College will be a dynamic educational leader exemplifying innovation and excellence within a student-centered learning environment.

### *Mission*

Ridgewater College empowers diverse learners to enrich their lives and reach their full potential through personalized and relevant learning experiences in an accessible, supportive, and inclusive environment.

### *Guiding Principles*

- *Enterprising* - We are future-focused and change-oriented, developing creative solutions to challenges that maximize our institutional, system and local resources.
- *Empowerment* – We develop and empower employees to make decisions to best serve students and stakeholders.
- *Excellence* – We strive to exceed expectations in all that we do.
- *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* – We seek to understand and appreciate the needs and experiences of every individual and actively work to provide genuine opportunities for everyone to succeed and participate in college activities and processes.
- *Trust and Respect* – We are committed to developing a culture based in processes and behavior that create trust and respect among all stakeholders.
- *Collaboration* – We connect and work together to achieve common goals while respecting needs and interests of stakeholders.
- *Curiosity and Creativity* – We constantly strive to understand, learn, change, and improve.
- *Accountability* – As individuals and groups, we willingly accept and take ownership of our successes and failures.

### *Equity Commitment*

Ridgewater College is committed to providing welcoming and inclusive campuses that value and respect the unique experiences, needs and contributions of individuals and groups from every background and identity to ensure that each student, employee and community member has a genuine opportunity for participation and success.

## **Commitment to Excellence**

The College is committed to the following principles and practices in its daily work, actions and decisions:

- *Embrace and practice the Guiding Principles* of the College.
- *Focus first and foremost on student needs and student success* – meeting students where they are and working with students to identify and attain their individual education and career goals.
- *Strive to inspire students* to think critically and creatively, solve problems, and adapt to a rapidly changing world.

- *Recognize and respect diversity* of thought, identity and background and affirm the worth and dignity of every individual.
- *Consistently pursue continuous improvement* by establishing performance and success indicators, measuring our efforts against those indicators, and using the results to make strategic decisions.
- *Promote ethical and honest behavior and accountability* at institutional and individual levels, focusing on support for the goals, interests and needs of the College.
- Demonstrate and reinforce the *value of lifelong learning*.
- *Consider the needs of the external community* to shape and inform our offerings, actions and decisions.

## Strategic Plan Objectives

The Strategic Plan has two primary objectives:

- **Increase student success** (satisfactory course completion, targeted program/credential completion, and student goal attainment)
- **Achieve stable, then increasing enrollment** (student headcount and enrolled credits each year)

Student success is a student-focused goal and enrollment is an institution-focused goal. The two objectives are directly linked in that improving student success should positively impact enrollment.

## Strategic Initiatives

The Strategic Plan will continue to focus on the following initiatives:

### 1. Expand and Enhance Engagement

- We will *increase engagement* within the College and with community stakeholders.
- We will *communicate and collaborate more thoroughly and purposefully* to increase awareness and understanding, and to encourage dialogue that will inform and guide our decisions.
- We will *increase transparency and clarity*, create *more proactive and ongoing dialogue* and feedback processes, and develop *stronger partnerships* and working relationships inside and outside of the College.

#### *Priority Actions:*

- We will improve internal and external communication and increase transparency and clarity.
- We will proactively seek feedback from students, employees, and the community.
- We will develop creative community partnerships and relationships.

## 2. Challenge the Status Quo

- We will actively and collaboratively seek ways to *reinvent “what we do and how we do it”* in order to transform our processes, programs, organizational structure and physical spaces and better respond to changing needs, demands, opportunities, conditions and interests in the College, in the communities we serve, and in the overall social context of higher education.
- We *will improve and streamline processes* to make decisions faster and empower the College community.
- We will *redesign delivery of programs and services* to meet evolving expectations and needs of students and employers.
- We will explore ways to *reconfigure and use our facilities and resources* to support college initiatives and create a more attractive environment for the 21st Century student.

### Priority Actions:

- We will increase stakeholder involvement while striving to make decisions faster and develop and empower team leaders to make decisions that impact their teams.
- We will evolve programs and services to respond to the changing expectations and needs of students, employers, and the marketplace.
- We will review campus facilities for possible repurposing and/or updating of available space.

## 3. Champion Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- We will fully commit to *providing a genuine opportunity for success for every individual* regardless of their starting point, challenges, abilities and personal means and resources.
- We will own the challenge of *eliminating opportunity, achievement, and employment gaps* that currently exist in our communities by identifying barriers and needs for students and developing effective solutions to position every student for success.
- We will strive to *increase the diversity of our faculty, staff, and administration* to reflect the communities we serve.
- We will strive to *act as a primary change agent* in the lives of every person and in the communities in our service area, with specific emphasis on individuals from the lower socioeconomic ranks of our communities.

### Priority Actions:

- We will encourage, value, and celebrate diversity of background, experience, and thought.
- We will develop resources and processes to collect, analyze and apply data to inform our work toward eliminating the achievement, opportunity, and employment gaps.
- We will embrace inclusion in all activities because diverse thinking creates better results.

#### 4. Strengthen and Promote the Ridgewater Student Experience

- We will *expect an individual commitment* from every member of the College to do their part to improve the student experience.
- We will *identify and maximize the strengths* of our offerings, services, and resources that have the potential to stand out among other higher education options in the regional marketplace.
- We will *genuinely adhere to a “Students First!” commitment* and nurture a culture that recognizes and values every member of the College as a contributor to student success.
- We will focus on *going above and beyond meeting student needs and expectations*.
- We will develop a *campus climate and culture based on respect, empowerment, and appreciation* of our students, faculty, and staff.

##### Priority Actions:

- We will apply a “Students first!” lens to all discussions, actions, and decisions.
- We will strive to go beyond what is expected of us from students and stakeholders.
- We will value our faculty and staff as central elements of an amazing student experience.

#### 5. Achieve Financial Sustainability

- Through progress on the four strategic initiatives above, we will *demonstrate the value* of the Ridgewater College student experience and *stabilize, then increase enrollment* while *creating operational efficiencies* that improve the financial bottom line of the College.
- We will strive to achieve a *balance between revenue and expenses* and establish *funding for new initiatives and growth* of college offerings and services to better serve our stakeholders.

##### Priority Actions:

- We will identify strategies and actions that will help achieve a balance between revenue and expenses and reduce and eventually eliminate the risk of an annual budget deficit.
- We will manage investments by and in the College with an emphasis on current and future viability.
- We will develop ways to effectively and clearly communicate the State of the College to stakeholders.
- We will encourage every member of the College to take responsibility for the enrollment and financial condition of the College.

## Ridgewater College

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a member of Minnesota State