STRATEGIC PLAN
2019 – 2022

RC **RIDGEWATER**
COLLEGE

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 4,700 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. This Strategic Plan, created in collaboration with community members, employees, and students will build on our past success and guide our work for the next three years.

Extensive dialogue between our strategic planning consultants and the college's administration, faculty, staff, students and community stakeholders produced a wealth of information about what we do well now, what could be improved, and what we must do that is new and different to strengthen the college.

I want to thank everyone involved in this process. While the effort produced a plan document that will help our college move forward and address challenges and make the most of new opportunities, it also confirmed one of the greatest strengths of Ridgewater – the shared passion about how much our college means to all of us and the people and communities we serve!

Craig Johnson

President, Ridgewater College

Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

Mission

A draft revision to Ridgewater's mission statement was developed during the strategic planning process in 2019. It is awaiting approval by the Board of Trustees. The draft mission statement is:

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

A short working version as appropriate: *Ridgewater College empowers students to reach their full potential.*

Vision

Ridgewater's vision statement was revised in 2019 as a result of the strategic planning process. It is:

Ridgewater College is a student-centered educational leader focused on innovation, excellence and affordability.

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.

Planning Process

In early 2019, Ridgewater College kicked off a collaborative and inclusive strategic planning process. The process respected the values, legacy, and heritage of Ridgewater College while addressing the changing needs of students, employees, and the community.

Ridgewater College made a deliberate decision to bring in consultants from Enterprise MN to introduce experience and thinking outside of our higher education environment. Given our consultants' experience in the private sector, particularly the manufacturing world, we believed that an outside perspective would broaden the analysis of our current conditions and strengthen our path for the next three years.

Inclusiveness and collaboration were key priorities throughout this planning process. Through student, community, and employee engagement efforts in the planning process, we have received rich insights and ideas which have helped formulate, not only the strategic initiatives listed below, but the organizational alignment and confidence to execute them.

Kickoff

A workshop was held in early March with the Administrative Council. This meeting identified high-level opportunities that the discovery phase of the project needed to validate, and the plan is expected to address.

Stakeholder Listening Sessions

Enterprise Minnesota conducted 15 listening sessions at the Hutchinson and Willmar campuses from mid-March through mid-April. Sessions were held with students, community members, and employees and collectively over 200 people participated. Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Result (SOAR) discussions were conducted to understand better the college's value perceptions and opportunities, as well as to identify common themes and capture ideas.

Idea Generation

In April, Enterprise Minnesota met individually with Ridgewater employee groups and the Cabinet to share themes and ideas that were generated from the listening sessions. New ideas and possible priorities were produced during these sessions.

Initiatives Identified

In working sessions with the Cabinet and Marketing groups, the identified themes were translated into high-level initiatives and goals. A relationship exercise was conducted to determine the initiatives with the most impact on all the other plan goals/initiatives.

Communication and Readiness to Execute

The plan actions support the Ridgewater Experience, a passion of Students First, and embrace continuous improvement processes. This plan provides the strategic framework within which other Ridgewater plans are created including the Master Academic Plan, Technology Plan, Facilities Plan, Strategic Enrollment Plan, Marketing Plan, Learning Effectiveness Plan, Diversity Plan, Emergency Operations Plan, and the annual Work Plan.

Strategic Initiatives

The planning process provided clarity on what must be done to strengthen the college and resulted in the development of five key initiative areas. While there is an identified need to focus on activities that will impact enrollment and revenue, it became apparent that making improvements in how we engage with employees and the community will positively impact and influence the rest of the initiative areas. We believe it will act as a positive multiplier. Therefore, **engagement** was identified as a critical driver, and **financial stability** is the primary outcome for the plan.

Further, we believe that succeeding in the following initiatives will enable us to maintain a learning environment that:

- Focuses on student needs and student success
- Equips students to think critically and creatively, solve problems, and adapt to a rapidly changing world
- Embraces diversity of thought, supports diversity of individual background and affirms the worth and dignity of each individual
- Focuses on continuous improvement by establishing success indicators, measuring against those indicators, and using the results to make strategic decisions
- Promotes ethical and honest behavior and accountability at institutional and individual levels
- Demonstrates and reinforces the value of lifelong learning
- Reaches beyond the College's walls to the community, the region, and the world

Expand and Enhance Engagement

We will increase engagement within our college and with external community stakeholders. We will communicate and collaborate more thoroughly and purposefully at all levels and in a variety of ways to increase awareness, understanding, and dialogue that will inform and guide our decisions. This effort will include increased transparency and clarity, more proactive and ongoing dialogue and feedback processes, and stronger partnerships and working relationships inside and outside of the college.

Guiding Statements
- We will communicate with transparency and clarity.
- We proactively and regularly seek feedback from students, employees, and the community.
- We will develop creative community partnerships and relationships.

Challenge the Status Quo

We will actively and collaboratively seek to find ways to reinvent "what we do and how we do it" to transform our processes, programs, organizational structure, and physical spaces to better respond

to changing needs, demands, conditions and interests in our college, in the communities we serve, within the Minnesota State system, and in the overall social context of higher education and the workplace. We will improve and streamline our processes to make decisions faster and to empower our college community, and we will redesign the delivery of programs and services to meet the expectations and needs of students and employers. We will also explore ways to reconfigure and use our existing facilities and resources to support college initiatives and create a more attractive physical environment for the 21st Century student.

Guiding Statements
- We will expand involvement, make decisions faster, and empower our leaders to make decisions that impact their teams.
- We will evolve our programming to reflect the changing needs of students, employers, and the marketplace.
- We will upgrade and update campus facilities.

Champion Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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

Guiding Statements
- We fully encourage, value and celebrate diversity of background, experience, and thought.
- We will actively work toward eliminating the achievement, opportunity and employment gaps.
- We embrace inclusion in all activities because diverse thinking creates better results.

Create a Distinctive Ridgewater Experience

We will identify what is different and unique about our college and find ways to maximize the strengths and distinctive aspects of our offerings, services, and resources to stand out among higher education options in the regional marketplace. This effort will begin with a "Students First!" commitment and a culture that recognizes and values every member of the college as a contributor to student success. In addition to providing quality programs and services for our students, we will improve the overall student experience to go beyond meeting needs and expectations. This same commitment to a quality experience will extend to employees to ensure a climate of respect, empowerment, and appreciation that enriches the daily work and sense of self for every member of the college community.

Guiding Statements
- Students first!
- We go beyond what is expected.
- We recognize that college faculty and staff are central to an amazing student experience.
- We foster an atmosphere and culture of respect, empowerment, appreciation, and collaboration that enriches the lives of our employees and our students.

Achieve Financial Sustainability

Through progress on our strategic initiatives, we will demonstrate the value of the Ridgewater College student experience and increase and/or stabilize enrollment while creating operational efficiencies that will improve the financial bottom line in our college. We will achieve a balance between revenue and expenses that will eliminate an annual budget deficit and establish funding for new initiatives and growth of college offerings and services to better serve our stakeholders.

Guiding Statements
- We will manage the finances of the college to ensure current and future viability.
  We will find ways to effectively and clearly communicate the State of the College to stakeholders.
  We expect every member of the college to take responsibility for the enrollment and financial condition of the college.

Strategic Plan Outcomes

While success can be measured in many ways, we believe that if we successfully carry out these initiatives and serve our students, employees, and community, enrollment at Ridgewater College will stabilize and/or increase in all categories. We will achieve a budget status that will allow new investments in the college to better support students, faculty, staff and community stakeholders. We will position the college as a strong and innovative institution that will support and bring greater value to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

Appendix

SOAR Analysis Summary

A strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results (SOAR) analysis is a strategic planning tool that focuses on the strengths and vision of an organization to assist in the development of strategic goals. During the strategic planning process, community members, faculty, staff, and students participated in 15 listening sessions that included SOAR exercises, shared conversations, and brainstorming to inform the identification of strategic priorities.

Strengths

- Great value - accessible, affordable, and flexible (studies can be personalized)
- Welcoming, inclusive, and diverse environment
- Rural/non-metro community and culture
- Faculty and staff are student-centered, lifelong learners, experienced, and passionate about student success; mentoring relationships continue after graduation
- Strong local alumni presence provides outreach and networking to students, and refer potential students to the college
- The college is a pillar of the community with strong community ties and connections
- Award-winning, accredited programs (e.g., Veterinary Technology, Agriculture, Nursing)
- Programs are up-to-date with good equipment
- Graduates are academically prepared
- Good graduation (56%), transfer, and placement rates (94%)
- The open feel of cafeterias and libraries

Opportunities

- Tap into growing community interest (e.g., allow the community to use facilities; strengthen college participation in community events)
- Strengthen opportunities for students to form interdisciplinary cohorts and peer-groups; increase out-of-classroom opportunities for student involvement on campus (e.g., campus gathering area; increase student groups/events; offer life skills pop-up classes taught by fellow students)
- Evaluation feasibility of student housing options with community partner(s)
- Build on reputation as a great value with award-winning programs
- Strengthen existing, and create new, business and industry partnerships (e.g., career fairs, speakers, internships, networking)
- Increase student-to-student and college-to-student influencers' recruitment efforts (e.g., invite potential students to class; increase communication w/parents and other student influencers, partner w/business to offer career days, community tours of facilities)
- Update and enhance facility space (e.g., classroom, lab space allocation, and equipment storage)
- Enhance relationships with high school counselors, administration, and students (e.g., increase PSEO awareness; co-curriculum and co-hosted events; student panels; classroom guests)

- Increase opportunities for acquisition of 21st Century skills and increase career services resources
- Add resources and flexibility (e.g., evening/weekend courses, childcare, degree vs. continuing education, parenting education, mental health resources)
- Expanding market for lifelong learning: strengthen partnerships with universities to increase opportunities for baccalaureate/advanced degrees on campus and to increase seamless transfers
- Partnership with universities to offer automatic acceptance to students ineligible at partner university
- Replicate award-winning programs

Environmental Scan
Students Served (2017-2018): 14,451

Non-credit students: 9,703
        Credit students: 4,748

Credit Students	Hutchinson	Willmar	Ridgewater
Transfer	1,092 (44%)	1,395 (56%)	2,487
Technical	904 (40%)	1,357 (60%)	2,261
Student of Color	252 (13%)	551 (20%)	803 (17%)
1st Generation, MN	398 (20%)	561 (20%)	977 (20%)
Underrepresented	291 (15%)	464 (17%)	755 (16%)
Attend Full-time	752 (38%)	1,301 (47%)	2,053 (43%)
Female	1,191 (60%)	1,531 (56%)	2,722 (57%)
Percent receiving financial aid			~86%
Employed			~82%
Care for a dependent			~40%
Entered RC w/needed technical skills			~60%
Total	1,996 (41%)	2,752 (59%)	4,748

Credit Students	Hutchinson	Willmar	Ridgewater
18 years of age, or less	597 (30%)	712 (26%)	1,309 (28%)
19 – 24 years old	714 (36%)	1,182 (43%)	1,896 (40%)
25 years of age, or more	665 (33%)	839 (31%)	1,504 (32%)
Unknown	20 (1%)	17 (0%)	37 (0%)

Top Programs by Enrollment:

Hutchinson: Liberal Arts (611), Non-Destructive Testing (116), Pre-nursing (183), Nursing Assistant (115), Nursing (86)

Willmar: Liberal Arts (664), Farm Business Management (235), Veterinary Technician (157), Nursing Assistant (109), Nursing (73)

Service Area:

Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Wright, Renville, Stearns, Carver, Sibley, Chippewa, Swift
Students from 41 states, 78 Minnesota counties

Origin	Hutchinson		Willmar		Ridgewater	
	2009	2018	2009	2018	2009	2018

Non-MN Students	33 (2%)	66 (3%)	112 (3%)	146 (5%)	145 (3%)	212 (4%)
States represented	18	30	18	31	25	40
MN Students	1,939	1,930	3,664	2,601	5,603	4,531
MN counties	47	60	70	65	76	78
Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Renville	457 (23%)	975 (49%)	595 (16%)	959 (35%)	1052 (18%)	1934 (41%)
Total	**1,982**	**1,996**	**3,797**	**2,752**	**5,779**	**4,748**

Top 10 counties:

Hutchinson: McLeod (673), Meeker (220), Wright (218), Sibley (101), Carver (92), Renville (66), Hennepin (40), Stearns (31), Kandiyohi (16), Scott (12)

Willmar: Kandiyohi (701), Stearns (178), Renville (113), Meeker (93), Swift (75), Chippewa (75), McLeod (52), Hennepin (54), Redwood (37), Wright (35)

Top high schools: Willmar Senior High School (66), Hutchinson High School (32), New London-Spicer High School (30), Glencoe-Silver Lake High School (21), Litchfield Senior High School (20), Dassel-Cokato High School (19), Bold High School (19), Kerkhoven Murdock Sunburg High School (16)

Communities

Hutchinson

Hutchinson is the largest city in McLeod County, Minnesota, United States, and is located along the South Fork of the Crow River. The population was 14,178 at the 2010 census. In the next ten years, the college-aged population (16-24 years old) is projected to decrease by 7 percent, while the number of residents aged 25-34 is forecasted to increase by 20 percent.
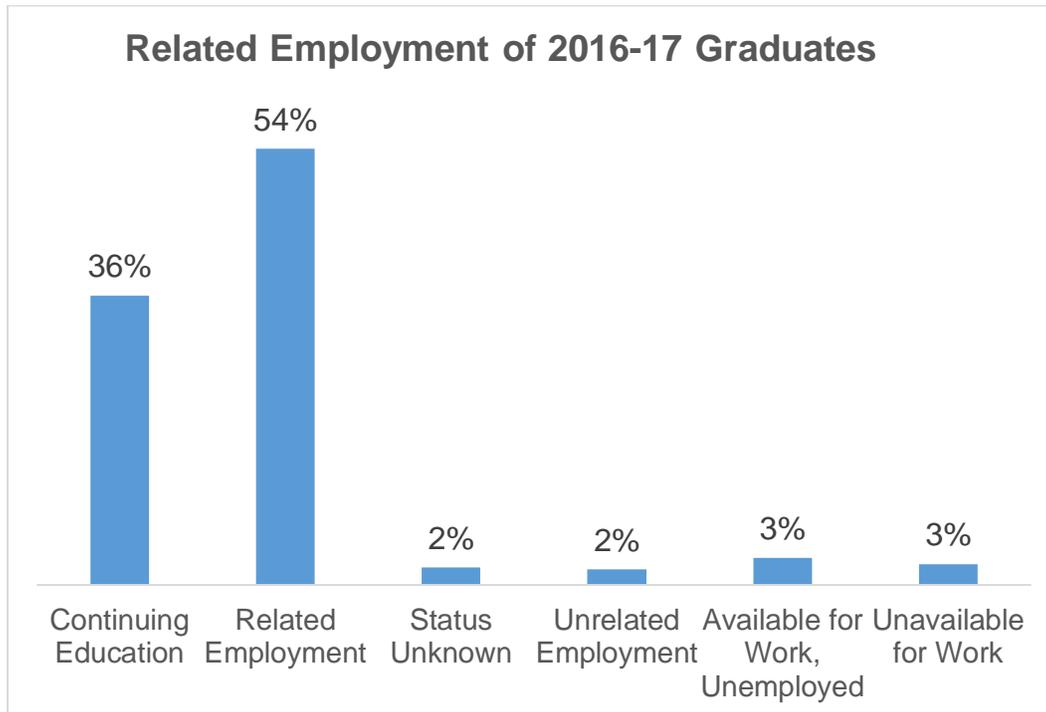
Willmar

Willmar, Minnesota, is located 95 miles west of Minneapolis/St. Paul and is the county seat for Kandiyohi County. With a population of 19,694, Willmar offers many of the amenities of a larger city, while still providing the benefits of a small town.

Willmar is a diverse community surrounded by rich farmlands, scenic lakes, and rolling hills. The economy is diverse and growing with vibrant agricultural, medical, and technology sectors. By 2030, the population of Willmar aged 16-24 is forecasted to grow by 8 percent, and the population aged 25-34 is expected to increase by 4 percent.

Student Outcomes

Related Employment of 2016-17 Graduates

Continuing Education	Related Employment	Status Unknown	Unrelated Employment	Available for Work, Unemployed	Unavailable for Work
36%	54%	2%	2%	3%	3%

Ridgewater College

MINNESOTA STATE | *Ridgewater College,*
a member of Minnesota State