

Your Pathway to Collaboration

ACM STRATEGIC PLAN | FALL 2022



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INTRODUCTION

A HISTORY OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Associated Colleges of the Midwest has been the pathway for collaboration among our liberal arts colleges for nearly 65 years. We have always dedicated ourselves to advancing the missions of our member institutions and collaborating to enhance their impact. Through distinctive educational programs and scholarship, ACM’s 14 members demonstrate the power of a residential, liberal arts education to develop engaged citizens, add to human knowledge, and expand lifelong opportunities for students and alumni.

Over our history, ACM has secured more than \$40 million in grant support for collaborative programs, with nearly \$13 million received during the last 10 years. Individuals who take part in ACM programs bring best practices, shared experiences, and collectively generated initiatives back to their home campuses. The relationships people develop through the consortium expand their networks and shape the cumulative experience of each ACM institution.

A CRUCIAL COLLABORATION

The liberal arts are rooted in preparing individuals to participate in civic life, and the transformative education that ACM members offer has never been more important or urgently needed. The complexity of today’s challenges demands educated citizens and leaders who ask incisive questions, understand history and context, connect different modes of analysis and fields of expertise, and ground their decisions in ethics and values. ACM’s member institutions give their students the tools to be nimble and flexible thinkers who continue to learn and adapt throughout their lives.

The ACM brings scale to our members and supports those mission-critical efforts that can be done more effectively in collaboration than by any single college alone. By cultivating partnerships, attracting funding, building communities of practice, and creating a space to experiment and innovate, ACM multiplies the power of our vital member institutions as a force for good in the world.

“By cultivating partnerships, attracting funding, building communities of practice, and creating a space to experiment and innovate, ACM multiplies the power of our vital member institutions as a force for good in the world.”

—Sonya Malunda, President



OUR PATHWAY FORWARD

In 2021, ACM embarked on a new strategic planning process to ensure the consortium provides the most significant value to our members at this pivotal time. A Strategic Planning Committee made up of presidents and other senior leaders led the inclusive process, which included input from a Member Engagement Survey and multiple discussions with academic deans and presidents over two years. In Spring 2022, the Committee identified five Strategic Areas of Focus that will frame ACM’s activities over the next three years:

- **Develop and Cultivate Leaders**
- **Foster Inclusive and Equitable Environments**
- **Build Community and Advance Well-being**
- **Incubate Innovative Ideas**
- **Refine and Enhance Existing Programs**

These areas of focus are not mutually exclusive. Many of our initiatives will naturally advance more than one focus area. This is a dynamic, living plan, and as it progresses, our activities will evolve and adapt. We will assess and adjust the plan each year as we incubate new ideas and address changing needs on our campuses and in the world.

Lastly, we cannot do this work alone. All these initiatives will be designed and implemented with partners, including our talented members, funders, fellow consortia, and nonprofit organizations. ACM is built on and stands by the belief that, through collaboration, we are greater than the sum of our parts.



Sonya Malunda
President of ACM

Who We Are

MISSION

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest enriches residential liberal arts education and strengthens members through collaboration.

MEMBERS

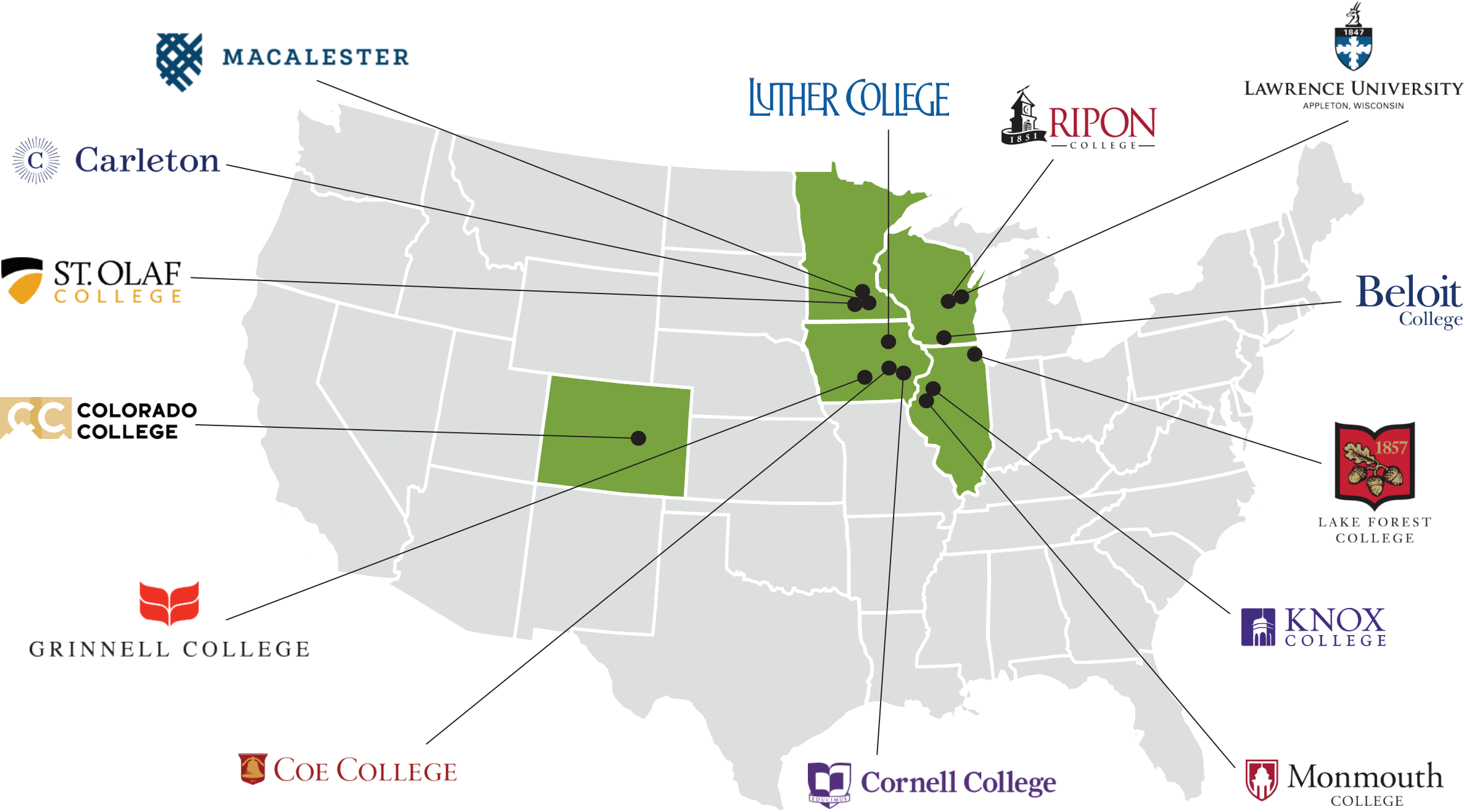
For nearly 65 years, ACM has been the vehicle for collaboration among outstanding residential liberal arts colleges located in the Midwest. Today, ACM is an incubator and catalyst for programming that advances the academic and professional success of faculty, students, and staff at the 14 member colleges.

PARTNERS

ACM values our external partnerships and collaborations. Our work would not be possible without support from major national and regional foundations, collaborations with other consortia, and partnerships with other higher education, civic, and cultural organizations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Through our strategic initiatives and programs, we will:
- Encourage excellence in teaching and learning
 - Promote equity and inclusion and celebrate individual and collective diversity
 - Strengthen the connection between inquiry and practice
 - Amplify the expertise of faculty, students, and staff
 - Cultivate an open environment for innovation and exchange
 - Leverage partnerships to enhance and enrich consortial programs



HISTORY OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

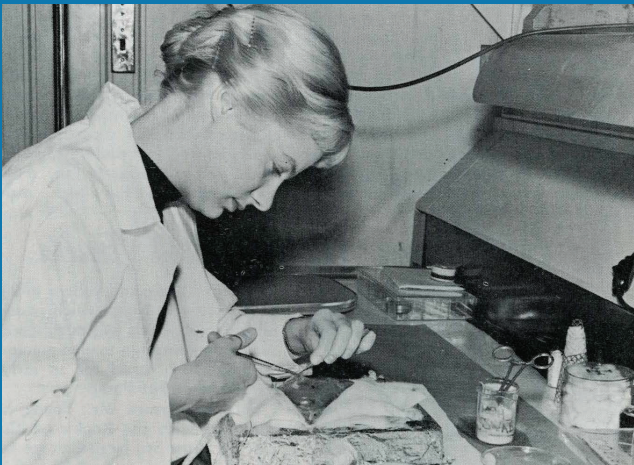
1950s

ACM grew out of occasional meetings of the presidents of the colleges belonging to the Midwest Collegiate Athletic Conference (today’s Midwest Conference). After a series of conversations about broader shared aspirations and related opportunities for collaboration, these colleges incorporated ACM in 1958 to address the following priorities:

- Advancing the member colleges’ shared interests and educational effectiveness
- Improving the efficiency of members’ operations, both administrative and cultural
- Assisting the members with developing additional sources of revenue

FOUNDING MEMBERS OF ACM

- Beloit College
- Carleton College
- Coe College
- Cornell College
- Grinnell College
- Knox College
- Lawrence University
- Monmouth College
- Ripon College
- St. Olaf College



Lila Williams, a student from Beloit College, studied at Argonne National Laboratory in 1961 through a partnership with the ACM.

1960s

In 1963, ACM added a fourth priority: to coordinate the members’ activities in areas of mutual interest and responsibility, including developing and implementing collaborative educational programs between the member colleges and other institutions. Highlights from the 1960s include:

- Off-campus study or internship programs in partnership with Argonne National Laboratory, Chicago Public Schools, and Newberry Library
- Establishment of a Washington Office to assist members in obtaining federal grants and monitor federal policy
- Opening a Periodical Bank, providing a centralized location for sharing scholarly periodicals, and coordinating with research libraries in Chicago
- Creation of a Single Application Method, enabling students to apply to multiple ACM colleges with one application and fee
- Launch of consortial group meetings, data sharing strategies, and Tuition Remission Exchange Program

NEW MEMBERS TO ACM

- Colorado College
- Macalester College

1970s

In 1976, the board established a committee on priorities, which recommended expanding off-campus study offerings, conducting institutional research, sharing data, and collaborating on admissions. In 1977, they added priorities for programs to enrich faculty and staff development and support to strengthen the participation of women and minorities. Key activities in the 1970s included:

- Faculty development programs including research training for social scientists and an ACM-Northwestern Faculty Development Project
- Operational studies on admissions and library programs
- Cultural immersion programs in Costa Rica, Florence, Hong Kong, India, London
- A student internship program for women in management
- Launch of the Nick Adams Short Story Contest

NEW MEMBER TO ACM

- Lake Forest College

1980s – 90s

ACM continued expanding its faculty development, off-campus study, and other student programs. Highlights from this period include:

- Off-campus study programs in Africa and Eastern Europe, including Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Yugoslavia (moved to Czech Republic due to Balkans war), and the Soviet Union/Russia
- Symposia for trustees titled “The Liberal Arts College: The Next Quarter Century”
- Programs for faculty focused on area studies, bilingual teaching, international education, and multicultural and global awareness, including the Ford Foundation Diversity Initiative to create curricula to meet the needs of increasingly diverse ACM campuses
- Launch of Minority Students in Academic Careers, which provided mentorship and research opportunities to encourage students to enter academia

2000s

In 2002, ACM made faculty and staff development its top priority. In 2008, reflecting on its first 50 years, the consortium developed a new strategic plan that included expanding leadership development for administrators, strengthening off-campus study programs, and enhancing organizational effectiveness. Key activities in the 2000s included:

- The Mellon Foundation–funded Global Partners Project, which included faculty travel grants and seminars, funding to bring scholars from other countries to ACM and other consortia’s campuses, and support for students to study abroad
- The Faculty Career Enhancement Program (FaCE), to enable ACM faculty to engage in individual or collaborative projects that explore ways to strengthen liberal arts education
- Establishing the Midwest Instructional Technology Center (MITC)
- ACM-Mellon Post-doctoral Fellowship Program
- New models in off-campus study, including Chicago program tracks in urban studies, arts, and entrepreneurship and business; an exchange program in Brazil; and summer programs in Mexico City and Pune, India.
- The beginning of ACM athletic tournaments

NEW MEMBER TO ACM

- Luther College

2010s – 20s

In 2014, building on the previous strategic planning process, ACM added a focus on enhancing, assessing, and articulating the value of liberal arts education, building connections between on- and off-campus learning and life after college. In 2019, ACM articulated its latest strategic priorities:

- Place: Place-based interdisciplinary programs
- Pathways: Career and educational opportunities for faculty, students, and staff
- Professional Development: Excellence and diversity through leadership and skills training
- Platform: Communities that share information, resources, and insights

Highlights from this period include:

- Discontinuing international off-campus study programs and building new strategic partnerships
- Providing pathways for underrepresented undergraduates and PhD recipients to pursue academic careers through the Undergraduate and Faculty Fellows Program for a Diverse Professoriate
- Interdisciplinary learning and professional development through the continuation of FaCE and the introduction of Seminars in Advanced Interdisciplinary Learning and Institute on College Futures
- Launch of consortial anti-racism initiatives to address the institutional and structural forms of racism that have contributed to the differential experiences and outcomes for students, faculty, and staff



ACM faculty and staff gathered at Lake Forest College in 2022 to discuss high-impact practices in the liberal arts.



STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS

Develop and Cultivate Leaders

The quality of an institution’s faculty, staff, and leadership is at the heart of its ability to deliver an excellent educational experience for students. To enable our colleges to operate effectively and find creative new ways to deliver on their missions, ACM is committed to providing opportunities for faculty and administrative professionals to be engaged, knowledgeable, and strategic in their careers while preparing students to lead.

Recent events make this more important than ever. The pandemic has brought profound change in the nature of the workplace. The ability to attract and retain faculty and staff talent and prepare students for the future of work will be essential for our colleges to flourish. The importance of this work is further emphasized by a growing interest among today’s students in activism, social justice, and the leadership skills, cultural knowledge, and emotional intelligence necessary to pursue those ambitions. ACM programs will enhance the ability of our members to recruit outstanding faculty, staff, and students and will create communities of practice that provide essential support and resources to help these individuals develop, contribute, and thrive.

The leadership development programs prioritized by the Board of Directors include:

Strategic Priority	Goals	Timeframe
Academic Leadership Fellows Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strengthen and enhance diversity in academic leadership at liberal arts colleges through three-year experiential/professional development fellowshipsBuild and support a cohort of humanities faculty who promote equity-based leadership practices and help their campus build more inclusive institutional cultures	July 2022– June 2025
ACM Student Leadership Summit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide opportunities for emerging student leaders to develop their leadership, networking, and communication skills as well as cultural and emotional intelligenceBuild a pipeline of student leaders to participate in the ACM Student Leadership Colloquium (see below)	Sept 2022 – June 2023
ACM Student Leadership Colloquium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Through a concrete set of projects on their campus or surrounding community, a cohort of student leaders will learn project management, principles of leadership, and other skills to make a positive impact in their community	Sept 2023 – June 2024
Staff Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strengthen leadership skills among administrative leaders through robust series of professional development offerings on such topics as managing direct reports, conflict resolution, leading multi-generational teams, achieving work-life balance, and others.Deepen ACM engagement with mid-career administrative staff through these professional development offerings.	January 2023– June 2024



STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS

Foster Inclusive and Equitable Environments

The data and research that document systemic inequities in our society have become more prominent during the past two years. Because education is the gateway to opportunity in American society, higher education institutions have an obligation to ensure that the pathways we create are equitably distributed. This commitment has become more urgent in the face of the unequal burdens of the pandemic, the unfair distribution of economic opportunity, and the persistent racism and violence causing trauma and harm in underrepresented communities.

The ACM’s current portfolio of diversity and inclusive equity initiatives is part of a broad-based anti-racism initiative that prioritizes five strategies: Professional Development; Community and Cohort Building; Data Collection and Analysis; Governance; and Campus and Community Partnerships.

The diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives prioritized by the Board of Directors include:

Strategic Priority	Goals	Timeframe
Equity in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Design and secure funding for an initiative to advance diversity and inclusive equity in STEM education on ACM campusesBuild and sustain a community of STEM faculty across ACM colleges to advance inclusive equity outcomes in STEM disciplines	September 2022– Summer 2023
DEI Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Seek external partners to advance DEI programs and services offered to ACM faculty, staff, and students	September 2022– June 2023
Undergraduate and Faculty Fellows Program for a Diverse Professoriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In collaboration with the Big Ten Academic Alliance:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide immersive program to enable up to 67 GRADx fellows to explore graduate study on Big Ten campusesBuild awareness among PhD candidates about academic careers at ACM colleges through Emerging Scholars ProgramSupport teaching, research, and tenure-track aspirations of new and ongoing Faculty Fellows (24 in total) through substantive workshops and cohort-building activities	July 2022– June 2024
Equitable Civic Engagement Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explore how BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color) students’ experiences in local communities affect their sense of belonging, well-being, persistence toward graduation, and academic successHost campus and community leaders to create community of practice in support of BIPOC student well-being	July 2022– June 2024
Anti-racism Professional Development Series	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Support ACM colleges in their commitment and responsiveness to anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles through professional development workshops and other conveningsBuild knowledge and implementation skills around inclusive and equitable practices for faculty and staff	July 2022– September 2023



STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS

Build Community and Enhance Well-being

Mental, physical, social, and emotional health will be key to faculty, staff, and students’ abilities to contribute their best ideas, develop a sense of belonging, and benefit fully from the educational and scholarly environment that ACM campuses provide. Mental health and well-being have been challenged by the social isolation, illness, and loss brought on by the pandemic; the disproportionate burdens that fell on caregivers; and the trauma of racism and hate that creates lasting harm for so many members of our communities. Ensuring the well-being of and sense of community among our students, faculty, and staff is an important aspect of the ACM’s work.

The community and well-being initiatives prioritized by the Board of Directors include:

Strategic Priority	Goals	Timeframe
New Programs to Support Mental Health and Well-being among Students, Faculty, and Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explore consortial agreement(s) on data gathering/sharing to support best practices and policies around student well-beingExplore possibility for consortial approach to telehealth services in support of students, faculty, and staff	September 2022–June 2023
ACM Communities of Practice and Identity Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand networking and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to foster connections and share skills across the consortium	July 2022–June 2024
Consortial Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Support ongoing cohort and community-building among 20+ existing consortial groups to strengthen connections and provide forum to address emerging issuesProvide more professional development opportunities, connections with other consortial groups, and focused discussions to strengthen consortial ties and address emerging issuesCreate additional consortial groups that support and advance ACM’s strategic direction	July 2022–June 2024



STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS

Incubate Innovative Ideas

Higher education and the residential liberal arts sector have undergone wrenching change in the past 20 years, with the pace of change accelerating during the past two years. Challenges to the residential liberal arts model include:

- deepening questions about the value of a liberal arts education,
- flight of students to urban centers and larger universities,
- growing engagement of employers in delivering skills-based educational programs,
- skepticism about the value of baccalaureate degrees and the emergence of new kinds of credentials, and
- new modes of educational delivery, with the pivot to online education during the pandemic rapidly accelerating this trend.

To navigate this rapidly changing environment, the ACM colleges need mechanisms for assessing the landscape, identifying and incubating promising ideas, and developing and evaluating innovative pilot efforts. ACM will foster a collaborative space that allows our members to explore and experiment with new models and pilot efforts that reaffirm the value of a residential liberal arts education for the 21st Century.

The new initiatives prioritized by the Board of Directors include:

Strategic Priority	Goals	Timeframe
ACM Online Course Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pilot online course sharing initiative with interested ACM colleges and explore potential to expand course offerings for students, enhance retention, and provide financial benefits to participating institutionsEvaluate and assess student demand for shared courses and institutional return on investment from the program	September 2022–Summer 2023
ICF 2.0 on the Role of Online Learning in Residential Liberal Arts Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Building on the success of previous Institutes on College Futures (ICF), convene colleagues to explore the impact of online learning at residential liberal arts campuses from multiple perspectives: equity, curriculum, accreditation, student success, financial, and academic	September 2022–June 2023
Incubate Other Innovative Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pre-Collegiate Program for High School Students – Explore the feasibility of a consortial pre-collegiate pipeline program for high school studentsStudent Employment Landscape – Examine the student employment landscape on campuses including trends, policies, support, and solutionsCollaborations with Higher Education Consortia – Explore extensions of current partnerships and new opportunities for outreach and cross-consortial collaborationSummer Research Program – Explore opportunities to create collaborative summer research opportunities for students across ACM colleges	July 2023–June 2025



STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS

Refine and Enhance Existing Programs

ACM currently hosts several ongoing collaborations, including the Newberry Seminar, Field Museum Semester, Oak Ridge Science Semester, the Data Exchange, the Tuition Remission Exchange Program, the Nick Adams Short Story Contest, and others. During the next three years, ACM will coordinate with the member colleges to refine and enhance these programs and sunset those that are no longer advancing the member colleges’ collective aspirations.

Strategic Priority	Goals	Timeframe
ACM Off-Campus Study Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define ACM’s role in managing off-campus study programs• Identify strategies that will enhance student interest in and demand for shared programs; explore expansion of these programs• Explore potential for short-term Chicago-based programming focused on civic engagement/social justice	July 2022–December 2023
Institutionalizing Community-Based Pedagogies in the Liberal Arts Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build awareness and expertise to enhance the stature of community-based pedagogies on and across ACM campuses• Create ACM community-of-practice to share strategies and best practices related to community-based pedagogies• Position ACM faculty and staff as national thought leaders on community-based pedagogies in the liberal arts	July 2022–June 2024
Midwest College Showcase	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase awareness of and access to residential liberal arts colleges through enhanced virtual and in-person admissions activities for students, families, and high school counselors, in collaboration with Great Lakes Colleges Association	July 2022–June 2025
Data Sharing and Dissemination Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinate with ACM colleges to review and enhance data collection strategies to meet campus needs• Enhance data collection to better understand and proactively engage the evolving landscape of equity, inclusion, and social justice on ACM campuses	August 2022–July 2024

LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

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- Allen Linton II, Senior Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Will Oldham, Senior Program Administrator
- Michael Vertovec, Assistant Program Manager
- Brian Williams, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Lisa Anderson-Levy, Executive Vice President and Provost, Macalester College
- Scott Bierman, President, Beloit College
- Jonathan Brand, President, Cornell College
- Anne Harris, President, Grinnell College
- L. Song Richardson, President, Colorado College
- Davis Schneiderman, Krebs Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Lake Forest College
- Jenifer Ward, President, Luther College

