Together We *Go Further*

ACM's Commitment to Excellence Through Collaboration

ACM STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK | 2025-2030

ACM

ASSOCIATED COLLEGES
OF THE MIDWEST

www.acm.edu

Together We
Go Further

ACM's Commitment to Excellence Through Collaboration

CONTENTS

A HISTORY OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

At the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, we believe that together, we go further. For almost seven decades, we have dedicated ourselves to advancing the missions of our member institutions and fostering collaboration to enhance impact. ACM's 14 members serve as national exemplars of the power of a residential, liberal arts education. Members provide exceptional learning experiences that develop engaged citizens, increase human knowledge, and prepare graduates for rewarding lives and careers. Our colleges promote the discovery of new knowledge and serve as pillars in their communities.

Over our history, ACM has secured more than $45 million in grant support for collaborative programs, with nearly $13 million received during the last decade.

A WHOLE GREATER THAN ITS PARTS

At ACM, collaboration isn't a strategy—it's our superpower. Together, we solve problems, spark innovation, and lead with purpose. The ACM brings scale to our members and supports their mission-critical efforts through undertakings better done in collaboration than by any single college alone. By cultivating partnerships, attracting funding, building communities of practice, rooting our efforts in data, and creating a space to experiment and innovate, ACM multiplies the power of our valued member institutions as a force for good in the world.

Individuals who take part in ACM programs bring best practices, shared experiences, and collectively generated initiatives back to their home campuses. The relationships developed through the consortium expand their networks and shape the cumulative experience of our members.

> "ACM brings together bold thinkers and trusted partners to do what no college can do alone: shape the future of liberal arts education."
>
> — *Lisa Jasinski, Ph.D.*

A LETTER FROM ACM'S PRESIDENT

This refreshed strategic framework reflects the collective wisdom of our campuses and our shared belief in the transformative power of liberal education. Based in collaboration and guided by the voices of our community, the framework offers clarity, flexibility, and purpose. In a rapidly changing world, the liberal arts model—grounded in critical thinking, ethical leadership, civic engagement, strong relationships, and a commitment to educating the whole person—is more relevant than ever. It strengthens our democracy and helps our nation thrive. I'm excited about where we're headed in the next five years and grateful to be on this journey together.

Lisa Jasinski
President of ACM

Who We Are

Though independently governed, the 14 colleges of the ACM form a powerful collaborative rooted in the liberal arts and dedicated to undergraduate, residential learning. From small towns to urban centers, our institutions reflect a wide range of histories, traditions, and curricula—including faith-based origins, professional and graduate programs, and academic calendars. These differences enrich our partnership, deepen our collective learning, and allow us to respond with agility and insight to the changing needs of our students and communities.
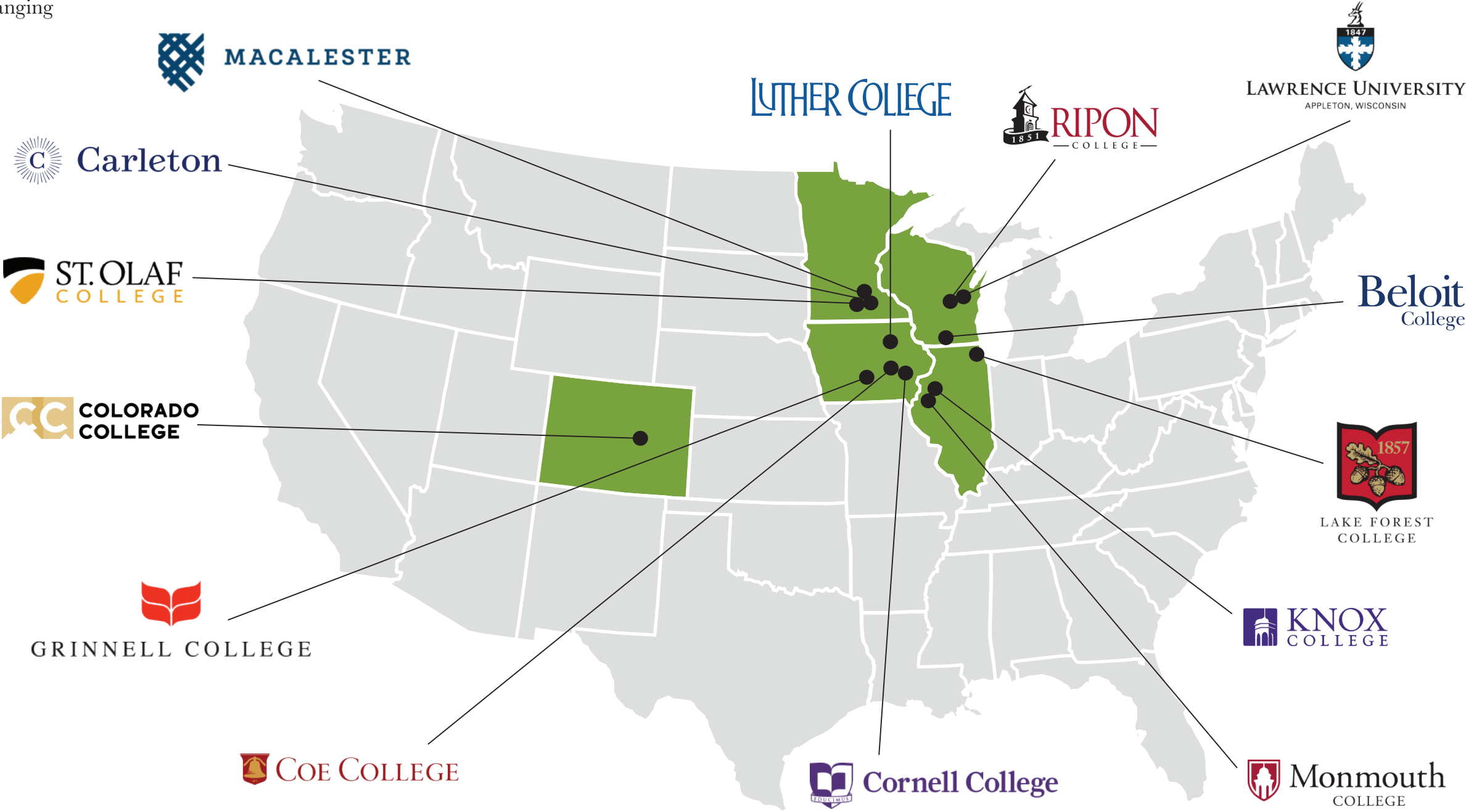
PARTNERS

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 higher education, civic, and cultural organizations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Through our strategic initiatives and programs, ACM will:

- Facilitate collaboration across member campuses to leverage expertise and resources at scale
- Address emergent challenges while remaining laser-focused on campus priorities
- Center programming on ACM faculty and staff
- Deliver innovative, relevant, and meaningful professional development
- Secure external support to magnify ACM's impact

MACALESTER

LUTHER COLLEGE

RIPON COLLEGE

LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY
APPLETON, WISCONSIN

Carleton

ST. OLAF COLLEGE

Beloit College

COLORADO COLLEGE

1857
LAKE FOREST COLLEGE

GRINNELL COLLEGE

KNOX COLLEGE

COE COLLEGE

Cornell College

Monmouth COLLEGE

ACM's History

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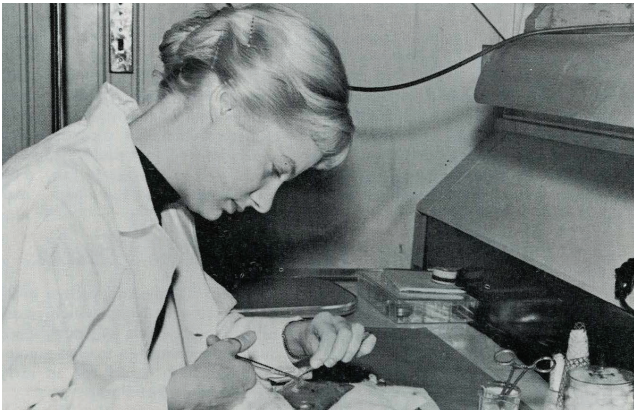
Lila Williams, a student from Beloit College, studied at Argonne National Laboratory in 1961 through a partnership with the ACM.

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 and data sharing

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
- Establishing the Tuition Remission Exchange Program
- Cultural immersion programs in Costa Rica, Florence, Hong Kong, India, and 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 to Today

Beginning in 2014, ACM entered a period of organizational and programmatic realignment, launching new strategic plans in 2014, 2019, 2022, and 2025. Each plan was built on ACM's previous successes and expanded programming to address the emerging needs of member campuses in moments of profound demographic, technological, economic, and social change.

Highlights from this period include:

- Supporting cross-institutional learning through the continuation of FaCE and the introduction of Seminars in Advanced Interdisciplinary Learning
- Launching the Institute on College Futures and efforts to help campuses innovate within changing business models
- Establishing the Mellon-funded ACM Academic Leadership Fellowship and other professional development programs
- Discontinuing off-campus study programs and building new strategic partnerships
- Aiding member colleges in identifying and addressing the institutional and structural forms of racism that have contributed to the differential experiences and outcomes for students, faculty, and staff
- Delivering programming to more stakeholders through online and hybrid learning

During the 2024 ACM Student Leadership Summit, 21 ACM undergraduates connected with peers across member campuses, learned from alumni and community leaders, and built professional networks.

Together We *Go Further*

OUR MISSION | WHO WE ARE

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

OUR VISION | WHO WE ASPIRE TO BE

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest champions accessible, equitable, and transformative liberal education through collaboration, professional development, research, and innovation. In a changing higher education landscape, ACM unites our members to achieve together what none could accomplish alone.

REFRESH PROCESS (2024-25)

In 2024-25, ACM President Lisa Jasinski completed an extensive consortial listening tour, which included visiting all 14 ACM campuses, reviewing member campus strategic plans, conducting an internal evaluation of current programs, and inviting feedback from over 100 leaders, faculty, and staff members.

From this process emerged a vision for the future. There was broad consensus that ACM's efforts to develop leaders should continue and be expanded, especially to include staff on member campuses. With several long-running grant initiatives coming to completion—including FaCE, mini-grants to support civic engagement, and a multi-part initiative to diversify the professoriate—many stakeholders saw a promising opportunity for ACM to more directly align its programming with the strategic priorities of its member campuses. Finally, stakeholders expressed a shared aspiration that ACM take the lead in mobilizing collective efforts to demonstrate the enduring value of the liberal arts.
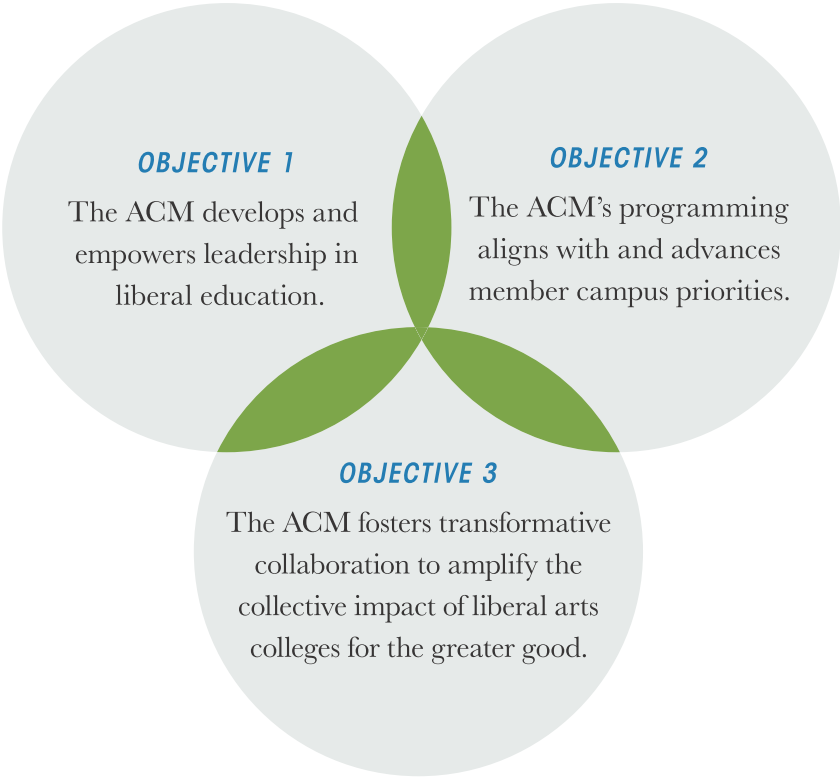
Based on the insights gathered, President Jasinski proposed that ACM "refresh" its strategic plan to build on past success while expanding into new areas.

FOCUS AND AGILITY

Anchored in three objectives, the strategic framework, *Together We Go Further*, provides the ACM an ideal balance of focus and agility. Where most strategic plans outline a series of named projects to complete over three to five years, ACM's strategic framework is a responsive tool to guide the organization's decisions about where to invest its efforts and resources on an emergent basis.

Designating priority initiatives annually is especially important in an environment characterized by disruption. In recent years, small colleges have faced an extraordinary array of challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, a national moment of racial reckoning, the advent of AI technology, and a great deal of uncertainty from state and federal governments.

Recognizing the impossibility of predicting the future and how member campus needs will change, this framework allows the ACM to respond nimbly to challenges and opportunities. Each year, ACM will present a set of priority initiatives—shaped in large part by stakeholder feedback—to the Board of Directors for approval.

OBJECTIVE 1
The ACM develops and empowers leadership in liberal education.

OBJECTIVE 2
The ACM's programming aligns with and advances member campus priorities.

OBJECTIVE 3
The ACM fosters transformative collaboration to amplify the collective impact of liberal arts colleges for the greater good.

OBJECTIVE 1: THE ACM DEVELOPS AND EMPOWERS LEADERSHIP IN LIBERAL EDUCATION.

The future of liberal education in the Midwest depends on bold, visionary leadership deeply rooted in our regional values of hard work, community, resilience, and innovation. The ACM is committed to cultivating leaders— faculty, staff, and administrators—who will champion the transformative power of the liberal arts in an era of profound change. Through intentional professional development, leadership training, and vibrant peer networks, the ACM prepares individuals to navigate complexity, strengthen their institutions, and advance the enduring mission of their colleges. By investing in leadership at every level, the ACM ensures that member campuses remain a beacon for rigorous inquiry, ethical engagement, student support, and educational excellence.

OBJECTIVE 2: THE ACM'S PROGRAMMING ALIGNS WITH AND ADVANCES MEMBER CAMPUS PRIORITIES.

ACM's member institutions are distinct in their histories and identities, yet united by their commitment to residential, liberal arts education. At its best, ACM's programs focus on the core priorities that our members have identified as essential to their future success: producing career-ready graduates, growing enrollment and improving retention, enhancing the campus experience, strengthening financial health and sustainability, and creating a deep sense of belonging for faculty, staff, and students. By aligning consortial efforts to these shared goals, ACM ensures that its initiatives serve individual institutions and elevate the collective impact of liberal arts education across the Midwest.

OBJECTIVE 3: THE ACM FOSTERS TRANSFORMATIVE COLLABORATION TO AMPLIFY THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT OF LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES FOR THE GREATER GOOD.

The Midwest has long been home to some of the nation's most dynamic liberal arts colleges: institutions that cultivate intellectual curiosity, civic responsibility, opportunity and social mobility, and a deep sense of place. In an era of shifting demographics and economic uncertainty, ACM serves as a force multiplier, bringing our institutions together to harness their collective strengths, address shared challenges, and elevate the voice of liberal education in the region and beyond. The ACM ensures that liberal arts colleges in the Midwest are not merely responding to change but shaping the future—demonstrating the enduring power of our educational model to serve the greater good and sustain vibrant communities across the region.

ACM operationalizes goals through priority initiatives and high-impact projects that directly advance one or more objectives of the ACM strategic framework. ACM leadership regularly identifies short-term priority initiatives—developed in collaboration with the Advisory Board of Deans and other key stakeholders—to present to the Board of Directors for endorsement. The ACM Board of Directors endorsed the following priority initiatives in April 2025.

OBJECTIVE 1: THE ACM DEVELOPS AND EMPOWERS LEADERSHIP IN LIBERAL EDUCATION.

1.1 Continue "Leading Effectively as a Department Chair" | In 2024-25, ACM piloted a yearlong virtual professional development program to equip current department chairs with the skills needed for effective department leadership. Based on the pilot's success and a perceived ongoing need, we will continue this offering to develop and strengthen mid-level leaders.

1.2 Pilot Professional and Leadership Development for Staff | Building on our faculty-facing leadership development programs, ACM will expand programming to enhance the ability of staff to lead departments and institution-wide projects, communicate effectively with colleagues and direct reports, meet the needs of our current and future students, and grow into new positions with increased responsibility.

1.3 Develop Future Faculty for Liberal Arts Colleges | Building on insights and relationships forged in its decade-long partnership with the Big Ten Academic Alliance, ACM will continue efforts to develop a robust pipeline of talented teacher-scholars to join the faculty at small liberal arts colleges.

OBJECTIVE 2: THE ACM'S PROGRAMMING ALIGNS WITH AND ADVANCES MEMBER CAMPUS PRIORITIES.

2.1 Support Grant Seeking and Capacity Building on ACM Campuses | Through online and in-person events, ACM will provide leaders, faculty, and staff on ACM campuses with the time, support, and guidance to develop competitive proposals to secure external funding. ACM will leverage the wisdom and experience of individuals within and beyond the ACM community to equip our members for success.

2.2 Seek External Support to Expand Strategically Aligned Programming | With several external grants coming to completion in 2025, ACM will seek support to expand our programming to address the stated priorities of member campuses, including supporting innovation in resource-constrained environments, preparing graduates for rewarding careers, and cultivating campus cultures that promote student, faculty, and staff retention.

OBJECTIVE 3: THE ACM FOSTERS TRANSFORMATIVE COLLABORATION TO AMPLIFY THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT OF LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES FOR THE GREATER GOOD.

3.1 Complete a Comprehensive Review of ACM's Data Collection and Sharing | ACM will conduct a comprehensive review to assess the usefulness, relevance, and impact of the data it collects for member campuses The review aims to understand how current reports support campus-level decision-making and identify opportunities to improve data collection, analysis, sensemaking, and dissemination.

3.2 Renew our Commitment to Supporting Consortial Groups | For decades, ACM has built community, fostered collaboration, and provided resources for more than twenty consortial role groups. ACM will review its internal processes and resource allocation to ensure these groups function efficiently and effectively to support current and changing campus needs.

A Balanced Scorecard approach enables the ACM to measure success across multiple dimensions while ensuring alignment with strategic priorities. Below are metrics and measures, categorized into four key areas:

DOMAIN 1: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
Ensuring ACM's fiscal health and capacity to support member institutions

- **Grant Expenditures** | Annual external funding used to support ACM initiatives.

- **Revenue Diversification** | Percentage of ACM's budget by source (e.g., investment income, member dues, etc.).

- **Long-Term Financial Reserves** | Reserve fund balance as a percentage of the operating budget.

- **Program Cost Efficiency** | Ratio of program costs to participant engagement, ensuring ACM delivers high-value, cost-effective programming.

DOMAIN 2: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & MEMBER SATISFACTION
Measuring ACM's responsiveness and value to members

- **Program Participation Rates** | Number of faculty, staff, and administrators engaged in ACM programs annually.

- **Stakeholder Satisfaction** | Periodic surveys of members assessing the perceived value, relevance, and effectiveness of programs.

- **Cross-Campus Collaboration** | Number of multi-institutional projects, partnerships, or working groups that ACM facilitates.

- **Member Campus Representation** | Percentage of ACM institutions participating in programs and initiatives.

DOMAIN 3: LEARNING & GROWTH
Building institutional capacity and leadership in liberal education

- **Strategic Program Alignment** | Percentage of ACM programming tied to member campus priorities (e.g., career readiness, enrollment/retention, financial sustainability, etc.).

- **Professional Development Reach** | Number of faculty and staff participants in ACM-led workshops and leadership programs.

- **Staff Development** | Percentage of ACM staff who engage in professional development to enhance their skills to perform key job functions.

DOMAIN 4: INTERNAL PROCESSES & OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
Ensuring ACM is well-run, responsive, and forward-looking

- **Data Utilization** | Increasing the degree to which member campuses use ACM research reports and data to inform decision-making.

- **Efficiency in Program Delivery** | Average time from program conception to launch, ensuring ACM remains nimble and responsive to campus needs.

- **Communications Effectiveness** | Engagement metrics for ACM newsletters, reports, and online resources (e.g., open rates, click-through rates, member feedback).

GOVERNING BOARD

Eric Boynton, President, Beloit College

Jonathan Brand, President, Cornell College

Alison Byerly, President, Carleton College

Laurie Carter, President, Lawrence University

Bradley Chamberlain, President, Luther College

Patricia Draves, President, Monmouth College

Victoria Folse, President, Ripon College

Anne Harris, President, Grinnell College

David Hayes, President, Coe College

Lisa Jasinski, President, ACM (Ex officio)

Robert Krebs, Interim President, Lake Forest College

C. Andrew McGadney, President, Knox College

Suzanne Rivera, President, Macalester College

Susan Rundell Singer, President, St. Olaf College

Manya Whitaker, Interim President, Colorado College

ADVISORY BOARD OF DEANS

Lisa Anderson-Levy, Executive Vice President and Provost, Macalester College

Peter Blitstein, Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Lawrence University

Emily Chan, Vice President and Dean of the Faculty, Colorado College

Ilene Crawford, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Cornell College

Pedro de Araujo, Dean of the College and Chief Operating Officer, Colorado College

Tom Halverson, Dean of the Faculty, Macalester College

Michelle Mattson, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Carleton College

Tara Natarajan, Krebs Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, Lake Forest College

Donna Oliver, Provost and Dean of the College, Beloit College

Michael Schneider, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean, Knox College

Gerald Seaman, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College, Grinnell College

John Sisko, Vice President and Dean of Faculty, Ripon College

Marci Sortor, Provost and Dean of the College, St. Olaf College

Jeffrey Wilkerson, Interim Provost, Luther College

Mark Willhardt, Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Monmouth College

Angela Ziskowski, Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Coe College

ACM STAFF

Lisa Jasinski, President

Carrie Conzelman, Vice President for Finance

Betsy Hutula, Chief Operating Officer and Vice President for Administration

Allen Linton II, Senior Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Grace McKee, Senior Program Administrator

Michael Vertovec, Associate Program Manager

SPECIAL THANKS TO ACM'S BOARD LEADERSHIP DURING THE STRATEGIC PLAN REFRESH PROCESS (2024-25)

Jonathan Brand, President, Cornell College

Ilene Crawford, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Cornell College

Anne Harris, President, Grinnell College

C. Andrew McGadney, President, Knox College

Suzanne Rivera, President, Macalester College (Board Chair)

Michael Schneider, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean, Knox College (Advisory Board of Deans Chair)

John Sisko, Vice President and Dean of Faculty, Ripon College

Mark Willhardt, Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Monmouth College