



Envisioning 2024:

The Strategic Plan for the University of San Diego

“Because the World Needs Changemakers”

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Introduction

“Since everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an *integral ecology*, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions.” *Pope Francis*

Pope Francis’s call to action is a moral and spiritual challenge to address the world’s most urgent problems and for all of humanity to join in solidarity in the care for our common home. In this *integral ecology*, the world’s complex problems derive from the interconnected human and environmental dimensions. At the same time, respect for human dignity is inextricable from care for the natural world and reminds us that we have a responsibility to the poor and marginalized, who are most vulnerable. *Laudato Si* brings urgency and contemporary relevance to the broader mission of Catholic higher education in the 21st Century, and the University of San Diego is uniquely equipped to respond to this challenge.

Since its inception, the University of San Diego has had a commitment to educating students to “a social awareness which impels to action.” The belief that a Catholic university must be committed equally to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and Catholic Social Teachings has compelled the University of San Diego to be more than just a Catholic university that prepares students for a personally fulfilling and meaningful life but also to be Changemakers prepared to confront humanity’s urgent challenges.

When the San Diego College for Women merged with the San Diego College for Men and School of Law in 1972 to create the University of San Diego, a modern Catholic university was born. Today, USD is the youngest private university included in the US News and World Report’s list of the top 100 national universities. We are recognized for internationally ranked academic programs, world class faculty, dedicated staff, environmental sustainability, an exceptional campus environment, study abroad opportunities and a beautiful campus. The university is well managed, possesses a strong balance sheet, is selective in its admissions, welcoming of all faith traditions and, in spite of being a relatively young university, has an endowment ranked in the top 200 in American higher education. The university’s commitment to community engagement has led to it being recognized by the Carnegie Foundation as a “Community Engagement Institution” and its dedication to social innovation and entrepreneurship led to its designation as one of only 36 Ashoka Changemaker campuses in the world and the first on the West Coast.

The university is well positioned to emerge in the 21st century as one of the great Catholic universities in the world. However, we must be prepared to confront even greater challenges ahead. While our current model has withstood the test of time, today’s challenges can appear to counter our faith-based tradition, the principles of liberal arts education, and how we operate. Increasingly,

higher education's value proposition is being called into question. Demands of students and other stakeholders, including expectations of more financial aid and less student and parent debt, along with escalating regulatory requirements, are increasing operating costs. Technological innovation is transforming the historical notion of residential higher education and traditional educational delivery systems. San Diego has growing bio/high tech and health care sectors that are demanding more graduates be prepared in life/health sciences, chemistry, engineering, and applied mathematics. As the foremost liberal arts university in the region, the local community is looking to USD to provide greater leadership in sustaining the arts and cultural aspects of our community.

USD alumni across the globe have expressed a desire to engage their alma mater in meaningful ways and look to the university to provide life-long education to stay relevant in myriad professional fields that the university offers including business, education and law. International conflicts and threats to civil society place additional demands on the university as a contemporary Catholic institution to prepare ethical leaders who possess a global view and the skills necessary to confront new challenges that were unimaginable a few decades ago.

These types of challenges compel some universities to question or even change their identities. At the University of San Diego, however, we are guided by our faith, rich history, a strong sense of purpose as articulated in our mission statement, and a clear set of values in our response to these challenges. Our identity is informed by important post-Vatican II documents, including the *Land O'Lakes Statement* (1967), *The Catholic University in the Modern World* (1972), *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990), and now *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* (2015). We find special resonance for our vision for 2024 in the following passage from *The Catholic University in the Modern World*: "Since the objective of a Catholic university, precisely as Catholic, is to assure in an institutional manner, a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of contemporary society...." We are inspired by Pope Francis's call to action and believe the University of San Diego has the unique opportunity to become the living embodiment of *Laudato Si*. Our Catholic identity and commitment to vulnerable populations across the globe provides the impetus for us to draw upon and to address humanity's urgent challenges.

Our institution is led by experienced leaders and scholars who are role models for the type of commitment to changemaking we seek to develop in our graduates. We also accept the challenge that to be a great global university we must also be a great local university. Our community is enriched by its diversity and opportunities that exist for even greater access and inclusion. The possibility to be known as a university of first choice among underrepresented populations is achievable in the next decade. Our location in San Diego near an international border provides unparalleled advantage to become a model anchor institution compared to our peers.

In response to Pope Francis's call to action we will create our own *integral ecology* by bringing our strengths, resources, and uniqueness to bear in fulfilling the world's need for changemakers. We will accomplish this through a bold new vision and six interconnected pathways that we believe will differentiate USD from its peers. In addition, a set of five overarching principles continues the momentum of the last decade to fulfill our mission.



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Strategic Planning Principles

Our mission statement, approved by the Board of Trustees in 2004, is relevant now more than ever and remains unchanged since its ratification.

The University of San Diego is a Roman Catholic institution committed to advancing **academic excellence**, expanding liberal and professional **knowledge**, creating a diverse and inclusive **community** and preparing leaders who are dedicated to **ethical conduct** and **compassionate service**.

USD’s core values (**bolded** in the mission statement above) also remain unchanged. We have a history of strong, successful and effective planning that sets the stage for future growth and development. However, there are certain strategic directions and goals that either have not been reached, require renewed commitment, or need to be reimaged in order for the university to fulfill its promise to our students, staff, faculty, alumni and community. We must continue to build upon and advance this work and the following five *principles* will guide our efforts as we look to the future.

STUDENT AND ALUMNI SUCCESS – By many different measures, USD students and alumni are successful. This principle builds upon this success by identifying specific targets that would place USD among the best in the nation. This requires that we develop curricular and co-curricular experiences that improve student learning, increase retention and graduation rates, and provide more and higher quality opportunities for internships and careers after graduation, and lay the foundation for living purposeful lives.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP – USD is in an excellent position to build upon the success of our global initiatives, including study abroad and the growth in international students. This principle supports programming that develops a global mindset in USD graduates as demanded by Pope Francis in his rejection of the globalization of indifference and a throwaway culture. USD seeks to set the standard as a school that produces liberally educated leaders with a global mindset, who embrace difference at home and abroad and act with integrity and compassion as changemakers engaged in a complex and ever-changing world.

CULTURE OF ENGAGEMENT – This principle describes the observable changemaker behavior we wish to see in USD students and alumni. It creates an environment for USD to rethink its outreach to alumni and other key constituents to create a 21st century model for alumni engagement. The ultimate aim is to develop a culture of engagement in students, alumni, and the USD community to serve humanity.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS – As a relatively young university, USD has made significant progress developing its resources and processes. This principle describes USD’s desire to create resources and processes that set the standard for institutional efficiency and effectiveness at a contemporary Catholic university. Human, physical, technological and financial resources, and the associated processes that set the standard for institutional effectiveness, will set us apart from our peers.

PROMINENT PROFILE – We are proud of the many recognitions that USD and its academic units have received, as well as the many recognitions received by our students, alumni and faculty. We will continue to develop and elevate our regional, national and international profile by effectively telling compelling stories about our programs, students, faculty and alumni.

These five principles will guide and inform our decision making as we look toward our vision of USD in the year 2024.

Vision and Pathways to 2024

Our strategic planning efforts have focused on creating a new and distinctive vision statement, one that activates USD’s mission to the year 2024 when the university will celebrate its 75th anniversary. We believe our vision for the future must be ambitious **because the world needs changemakers** and propose the following vision statement:

2024 Vision Statement:

The University of San Diego sets the standard for an engaged, contemporary Catholic university where innovative changemakers confront humanity’s urgent challenges.

We believe this vision statement is bold and ambitious, yet realistic. We have a tremendous opportunity to respond to the Pope’s call to action and use *Laudato Si* to provide direction for the university. At the same time, this will be a challenging endeavor. Our goal to “set the standard” reflects our ambitions for leadership among Catholic universities and indeed among all universities. There are risks inherent to achieving our vision, and successfully achieving it necessitates stakeholder buy-in, clear communication, coordinated activities, exceptional leadership, supportive structures and processes, and financial resources.

Not only are we uniquely qualified to be the university most closely aligned with the urgent call of *Laudato Si*, we are also committing to an intentional and disciplined focus on realizing this vision.

As the standard bearer for an *engaged, contemporary* Catholic university in 2024, we identify six interconnected pathways and describe how each will help achieve this vision. The interconnectedness of the six pathways reflects our understanding from *Laudato Si* that issues are complex across many dimensions. The six pathways are organized into two groups of three and illustrate both an *engaged* and a *contemporary* Catholic university.

We will demonstrate what it means to be an *engaged* Catholic university through the following three pathways:

ANCHOR INSTITUTION – Engage our communities in deep, democratic and meaningful partnerships, with a shared vision and collaborative effort. These anchor partnerships are primarily local but can extend beyond the borders of our campus and nation. USD has a significant number of partnerships in the San Diego community and beyond. We must intentionally strengthen and deepen our partnership network and join communities as we work to enhance USD’s role as in the community. This will manifest in many ways since opportunities exist for USD to be more engaged locally in improving K-12 education, enhancing economic development, promoting health care, and serving as a catalyst for community development. This work will help USD emerge as the leading faith-based, anchor university in the United States. In order to set the standard for an engaged, contemporary Catholic university in 2024, we must be a great local university confronting the urgent challenges of our community..

ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP – Encourage the integration of knowledge and research to address questions within and across disciplines and communities with local specificity and global implications. Engaged scholarship supports our commitment to our core value of academic excellence. Boyer (1990) describes four types of scholarship: (1) discovery, (2) integration, (3) application (now often referred to as engagement), and (4) teaching and learning. Engaged or applied scholarship critically examines existing issues, whether locally or globally, in business or in government policy, and many other fields and often identifies solutions to pressing issues. Our vision for 2024 explicitly calls for us to confront humanity’s urgent challenges through the work and engaged scholarship of faculty and students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

PRACTICE CHANGEMAKING – Infuse the entire university with a spirit and practice of changemaking, where innovation and entrepreneurship lead to positive change. We believe everyone can practice changemaking, and at USD we do so with humility. Our belief in compassionate, active citizenship guides our commitment to foster a more humane world through curricular and co-curricular activities, including community engagement, cultural immersion, innovation, experiential and field-based courses, on-line learning, undergraduate research, and social venture design. We encourage a commitment to addressing social issues and to exploring new ideas that will have a positive social impact.



We will demonstrate what it means to be a *contemporary* Catholic university through the following three pathways:

ACCESS AND INCLUSION – Expand access and demonstrate inclusive excellence to benefit the learning and success of all students and to advance educational equity and become a first-choice university for underrepresented students. Our value of community reflects our dedication to “creating a welcoming, inclusive and collaborative community accentuated by a spirit of freedom and charity, and marked by protection of the rights and dignity of the individual...creating an atmosphere of trust, safety and respect.” USD’s Culture of Care brings this commitment to everyday campus life. We have achieved much to make USD a more diverse and inclusive place. We must continue to reflect and renew our commitment to foster an inclusive community and to actively advance access and inclusion. We must also expand access to a USD education for students who cannot take courses entirely on campus or within the confines of a fixed semester system through expanded on-line and hybrid learning.

CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME – Demonstrate care for all creation by embodying the urgent call of *Laudato Si* through teaching, scholarship, campus culture, and community partnerships. The message of *Laudato Si* tells us we must not only speak the words, but also take immediate action in concrete ways at all levels of the university to care for our common home. From messaging on campus for our visitors and our community, to policies affecting how we do business, to facilitating engagement from our staff, students, faculty and administrators, creating and supporting curricular efforts at all levels, we identify areas of opportunity to create a truly shared and lived vision for Care for Our Common Home.

LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION FOR THE 21st CENTURY – Prepare students to lead purposeful lives with successful careers in the 21st century. Purely vocational, skill-based training will not stand the test of time in an age of rapid technological change. A 21st century liberal arts education provides the opportunities to study the historical, cultural, and scientific/technological forces that have ushered in this century and that will shape our future. Students learn to challenge ideas, and to discern significant truths about reality, faith, and human existence in their lives and careers. A 21st century liberal arts education delivers the learning outcomes that 80% of employers seek according to surveys by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. These include the ability to write and speak effectively, construct and evaluate arguments, apply knowledge in real-world settings, make ethical decisions, and work in teams. In addition, the 21st century demands students who possess the technological skills expected in the workplace. As a Catholic university, a liberal arts education is further enhanced with attention to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, with the great questions about why we exist, and intentionally focusing on the development of the whole person, including the spiritual.

Conclusion

Addressing humanity’s urgent challenges requires changemakers. We are well-positioned to respond to the Pope’s call to action in *Laudato Si* and to do so with urgency. The university is of a size, scale and place in our history where the interdisciplinary collaboration and administrative discipline required to address complex problems is possible. If we act deliberately and pursue the agenda outlined in this strategic plan, we believe USD will set the standard for a contemporary Catholic university in the 21st century and emerge a stronger and more vibrant academic community when we celebrate our 75th anniversary in 2024.

“Because the World Needs Changemakers”

Steering Committee

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Esteban del Río '95, PhD, Associate Provost for Inclusion and Diversity, Director of the Center for Inclusion and Diversity, Associate Professor of Communication Studies

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MISSION STATEMENT

The University of San Diego is a Roman Catholic institution committed to advancing academic excellence, expanding liberal and professional knowledge, creating a diverse and inclusive community and preparing leaders who are dedicated to ethical conduct and compassionate service.

FIVE PRINCIPLES



VISION STATEMENT

The University of San Diego sets the standard for an engaged, contemporary Catholic university where innovative changemakers confront humanity's urgent challenges.

SIX INTERCONNECTED PATHWAYS

