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A REPORT OF THE

Academic Portfolio Planning Task Force

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1. Preface

In early Fall 2021, the Planning & Priorities Committee established the Academic Portfolio Planning Task Force (APP) by revising the charter of a task force that had previously operated under the auspices of academic prioritization.¹ The revised composition and mandate were intended to support a long-term migration of task force work toward more comprehensive and multi-year academic planning in the context of existing university commitments and guiding documents, analysis from the Strategic Budget Review (SBR), and developments in higher education.

While initial momentum case analyses from the SBR indicated a need for significant budget adjustments that would have required APP to recommend major expense-reducing overhauls to the divisional budget through the elimination of programs and positions, subsequent developments lifted that requirement, expanding the compass of APP's

aiming at attracting students in large numbers (rather than just the students interested in one field or major) by helping prospective students and parents, regardless of their major, to see and experience the qualities of Calvin's learning experience regardless of a student's stated academic interests.

Founded on this emphasis on the overall shape of the learning experience, this report outlines diverse recommendations that emerged from APP deliberations and concludes with a number of appendices relevant to various aspects of the committee's work. This report is provided to the Planning & Priorities Committee (with the unanimous support of APP), but that is not the "endpoint" of the work. Future work on the priorities emerging from this report will need to be

Because it focuses intensely on program cuts, the Academic Program Review process was program-centric; APP, in contrast, focuses on the overall portfolio of the academic enterprise, including the

3. Setting the Strategic Framework for Calvin's Academic Program

These assumptions, along with the APP mandate, led us to focus on mapping the academic experience as a whole, lest we lose the (portfolio) forest in our focus on the (programmatic) trees. We aim to contribute to Calvin's efforts to build the most compelling student experience of any Christian university, and in the academic division, this will mean investing in individual schools and programs, cross-cutting domains of learning, and distinctive pedagogies and practices of engaged education. Understanding these various dimensions of our academic portfolio's strategic framework will allow us not only to plan for and build that more compelling student experience but also to assess and prioritize program opportunities in light of that framework and to develop faculty and staff for participation in it.

Specifically, we believe a portfolio that fosters the most compelling student experience will combine:

1. An emerging school-based university structure that offers attractive academic programs (e.g., core, undergraduate majors/minors/certificates, graduate degrees and certificates) supports co-curricular learning through strategic leadership and operational excellence. _____
2. Domains of learning that students, alumni, and other stakeholders come to recognize as distinctive strengths of the university. The domain we have identified are generated out of our mission and theological commitments, and they present attractive opportunities to large subsets of prospective learners. Like the cross-university "webs" of relationships and collaborations envisioned in both Vision 2030 and the university structure

Design consideration 5 – “A Calvin-specific approach to distinct schools: permeable, interdependent, interconnected”: Establish seven schools with both administrative and public-facing functions coupled with fewer departments housing multiple disciplines/programs and numerous ways of connecting schools to each other.

While previous work has identified select extant networks that function as webs, we would be remiss to imagine that these webs will sustain themselves or become visible and legible features of the university without intentionality. Indeed, the structural frame of Calvin’s academic enterprise – our schools and departments – is less likely to work as a web without investment in building a broader portfolio that emphasizes interconnections across programs and other learning experiences. In order to emphasize these connections, we recommend investing in domains of learning.

In identifying these domains, we again take our cues from past work. Specifically, Calvin’s Vision 2030 calls us to carry out our mission through [partnership](#) with God, neighbor, and the broader environment:

The statement’s emphasis on partnership and relationship in our work as Christ’s agents of renewal invites us to focus on how cross-cutting domains within our academic portfolio can reflect relationships of shalom, address our enduring mission to contemporary issues, make visible certain commitments and communities,⁵ and remain attuned to the experiences, gifts, and needs of our local community and global partners at this particular moment in time, so that we might collaborate with and learn from them as we promote their flourishing.

We defined several domains of learning with these criteria:

⁵ Kavin Rowe’s book, [The Way of Christ](#), may be an interesting touchpoint for us. In it, Rowe argues that early Christianity was distinguished by institution-building that these institutions made visible not only certain commitments, but also communities that were otherwise “invisible” at the time, especially the vulnerable (e.g., the sick, the poor). It is worth asking how our work to define cross-cutting domains may lay the foundation for analogous work in our institution, and how this work is rooted in our mission. The good examples of Calvin Prison Initiative and Ready for Life may stimulate our thinking about how broader, institution-wide domains of learning can be framed to make visible commitments, communities, and partners.

1. They are clearly generated out of our mission and our work to educate for ⁶ (they are not merely possibilities that don't conflict with the mission).
2. They cut across schools and disciplines, as our university structure suggests they should.
3. They present attractive opportunities to subsets of prospective learners and to wide swaths of existing students, alumni, and other stakeholders.

The following chart displays (1) key relationships that reflect our missional identity and theological commitments, (2) where Calvin has made foundational arguments, rooted in Scripture and the confessions, about their special relevance to our mission, (3) examples of places where we already educate with these relationships in mind, and (4) other places where we have just recently taken aspirational steps (e.g., cohorts).

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We live in relationship to...	...through...	..articulated inand illustrated by work we currently do...	..and aspire to do.
God	worship; spiritual formation; deliberate and explicit integration of faith and learning across all subjects	institutional charter, faculty and staff handbooks	investment in faith and learning through dVI, CCCS, Kuiper Seminar; chapel	ministry leadership cohort; expanded and enhanced faculty and staff development in faith integration
each other	citizenship, ethical leadership, and just action that seeks renewal, restoration, healing of the city, promoting the thriving of communities in our region and around the world	Educational Framework; FEN	CPI; dVI modules for faculty development; Henry Institute; interfaith relationships	Common Good Coalition; Civic Hospitality Project; public scholarship COP; a center that promotes the thriving of local communities and global partners
our environment	practices of discovery and an ethic of sustainability	STARS; Statement on Sustainability	Plaster Creek; Ecosystem Nature Preserve; Clean Water Institute	Sustainability Fellows; best Christian thinking on supply chain
our own bodies ⁷	attention to the health of mind and body	Health Sciences - Academics Calvin University	Nature RX; Counseling Center; community-based nursing; partnerships with local providers; top DIII athletics	Health Ambassadors; School of Health
what we create	our engagement with the arts, business, and technology	Arts Calvin University Business Calvin University Computer Science Calvin University Engineering Calvin University	Design Hub; Arts Council; Center for Faith and Writing; digital humanities; Calvin Center for Innovation in Business; Calvin Startup Garage; Young Women's Business Institute	Digital Life Cohort; Arts Collective; Calvin Human-Centered Design Hub; best Christian thinking on business, engineering, education and the digital revolution (perhaps, e.g., through a center for faith and technology)

⁷ "Our own bodies" was regarded as infelicitous by some members of the group who said it might sound like we mean each one to one's own body. This is obviously not what we mean, but we mean to emphasize that seeking shalom includes regard for human health. While some suggested that "thriving" or "flourishing" fit here, thriving or flourishing are much more comprehensive topics that relate to every dimension of this table. Thus, we call attention to that goal in the paragraphs that lead into this table.

1. Undergraduate research through deep mentorship (examples: Civitas; McGregor; STEM in Summer)
2. Artistic creativity through co-curricular collaboration (examples: Rangeela; Calvin Theater Co; Dance Guild; musical ensembles;)
3. Global and off-campus programs that promote cross-cultural learning and cultural intelligence (examples: short-term, long term, foreign language abroad, programs in many countries and cultures around the world, Global Business Certificate)
4. Leadership, entrepreneurship, and service through community partnership (examples: Service Learning; Nexus Financial Planning; Ready for Life; Worship Apprenticeships, Calvin Startups, Kim Investment Management (KIM), Women's Business Network)
5. Internships, co-ops, and action-learning projects that link employment, vocation, and learning (examples: discipline-specific efforts; DC Semester; Calvin Action Projects)

Many of these are considered "high-impact learning practices;" organized well, they can be important vehicles for achieving the outcomes of a liberal arts education. All of these have historically been strengths of a Calvin education, though they have not always been woven throughout the fabric of the institution in ways that touch every student.

We see these practices of engaged learning as integral to excellent academic programs and recognized domains of cross-disciplinary learning – and we are not alone in that perspective. Most universities highlight one or more of these practices, and some of our strongest aspirants – e.g. [Elon](#) or [Hendrix](#) – bundle up their active use of these practices as an indispensable feature of the student experience and . Our challenge is to s

An examination of program-level data in light of the opportunities, assumptions, and strategic framework above led to the following recommendations:

We recommend consulting with departments about sunseting the following minors.¹² This work should be undertaken in consultation with other affected departments.

- Computer Science minor for education
This minor is a relic of a past education credentialing regime and no longer relevant.
- Scientific Computation and Modeling minor
This minor was custom-built for a purpose it no longer serves. Care should be taken in addressing it so that other departments that rely upon its courses still have those advantages.

We recommend revising or reconfiguring the following minors for increased efficiency, increased alignment with strategic framework, and interest generation.

- African and African Diaspora Studies minor
- Gender Studies minor
- Medieval Studies minor
- Recreational Leadership minor
- Urban Studies minor

We recommend that the School of STEM, School of Education, and Provost's Office explore, with the faculty of Science Education Studies, joint appointments for the faculty currently assigned to that department.

- Science Education Studies

¹² All six of the first named programs in this section are minors. Two things are worth noting about minors: (1) We ask that departments and schools together make the effort to clean up defunct or inefficient minors beginning next year and on a regular basis. Such work should be done in the course of other normal reviews (e.g., ten-year reviews, periodic reviews by APP, and others), but should also be part of a more frequent regular rhythm. (2) We will not commit to hiring in order to sustain minors. As is already the case at the department level and with other programs (e.g., majors and certificates), responses to voluntary or involuntary departures that generate an open line will vary according to demand for the program in question. It is already the practice for deans and the provost to consider program vitality, including demand, when recommending whether to refill or to reallocate one or more lines. Decisions not to refill one or more vacated lines because they cannot be justified by the vitality of the program, of course, amount to decisions not to resource a program and may have adverse consequences for that program. This is sometimes a natural result of attrition and does not require the APP process as background to a decision. When a faculty line is vacant, the provost's office recommends to PPC whether and where to allocate that line. The framework and program priorities outlined in this document could conceivably result reallocating a vacated line away from a program with low total demand, external demand, or overall vitality to another program or to a priority outlined in this report.

Of course, a decision not to resource a program after faculty depart is quite different from a decision to eliminate a program that requires people to depart. Recent prioritization decisions have been the latter sort of decision. This footnote refers to the former sort.

It is also true that a decision to reallocate lines is quite different from a decision to reduce total lines. This footnote refers primarily to the former, reallocation, and not primarily to the latter.

APPENDIX A
APP Charter



APPENDIX C APP Data and Metrics

The Academic Portfolio Planning Task Force collected and considered data from various sources this year. APP sometimes considered this data in group sessions and sometimes used it in paired or small-group work. Individual members were able to access the data and used it in various ways to inform their proposals and participation in group deliberations and decisions.

Using Airtable, APP requested substantial quantitative and qualitative data from departments. This data reflected APP interests in a wide variety of concerns from programmatic distinctives to diversity, equity, and inclusion to the webs of interdepartmental collaboration, as well as low-enrolled courses and steps already taken to make the department more effective and efficient. The Airtable form that APP used to collect this information from department chairs can be provided to PPC members upon request.

APP also developed multiple indicators of departmental financial vitality developed in collaboration with Institutional Effectiveness & Analytics. These included the following:

A five-measure composite financial scoring tool

1. Credit hour revenue over instructional costs
2. Credit hour revenue over total costs
3. Major revenue over total costs
4. Percentage of low-enrolled courses
5. Credit-load ratio

Of these five measures, four (1-4) were new to Calvin, and the first three measures included both actual revenues and expenses for the first time. This represented a significant improvement over using only proxies for revenues and expenses. We were also able to calculate these using both actual revenues (e.g., the actual tuition paid by specific students) and expenses (e.g., the actual compensation of faculty) and average revenues (e.g., the average net tuition revenue per student) and expenses (e.g., the average compensation of faculty) over one-year and three-year periods. The ability to see results according to both actual and average calculations is especially valuable for various reasons, including our wariness of both (a) “penalizing” departments that have a disproportionately high percentage of students receiving large merit- or need-based discounts and (b) “rewarding” departments enrolling a disproportionately high percentage of low-need, low-merit students.

Two of these five measures (1 and 2) were developed with specific intentions to reflect the value of “webs” between departments and schools.

Contribution margin

We also calculated the contribution margin of each department, netting out their total credit hour revenue and total departmental expenses.¹⁴

Demand-related data

We accessed additional demand-related data from Calvin's enrollment division and from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

The measures of departmental financial vitality will be automatically updated every year. These will be of ongoing value not only to APP, but also for decision-making by departments, deans, and the provost's office.

APPENDIX D Center & Institute Memo

In the course of our work, some APP members produced a memo on the role of Calvin University's centers and institutes in shaping our academic portfolio and supporting the most compelling student experience possible while also contributing in their distinctive ways to faculty development, scholarship, and public engagement.

Dean David Wunder has been working with center and institute directors to collect and synthesize feedback on the original memo and to cast a vision for integrating centers and institutes – sometimes more fully, and sometimes simply more visibly and legibly – into the fabric of the institution. Sharing the entire strategic framework developed in this report will be a next step toward aligning their work while supporting and promoting their special contributions to the community.

APPENDIX E
Preliminary Sketch of APP Workplan for FY23

Next year's APP work will benefit from the strategic framework developed in this report. Next year's task force will need to chart its course carefully, but a very preliminary sketch of its work follows.

Review recommendations from spring 2022 and evaluate progress in consultation with