

### Summary

Enrollment planning group discussions were guided by three questions:

1. What should be Lake Forest's enrollment priorities?
2. What strategic initiatives will help advance these priorities?
3. What are the potential impacts, costs, and other considerations associated with these initiatives?

The committee learned about Lake Forest's history of enrollment planning and challenges to increasing headcount and average net tuition revenue, or ANTR (see Appendix A). From 2006-2020 ANTR has been largely flat. This has been a national trend, except for highly selective institutions. In 2021 and 2022 Lake Forest's ANTR was higher, largely due to increased funding from the Davis Foundation for United World College (UWC) students, in recognition of the significant number served by the College.

Regarding headcount, Lake Forest has bucked discouraging enrollment trends. According to the Council of Independent Colleges' Key Indicators, Lake Forest's first-year enrollment change from Fall 2016 to Fall 2020 was 8.1%, significantly higher than the national median of -12.4% and Midwest median of -11.2%. The College's entering classes have been climbing steadily each of the last five years, from 422 first years and transfers in 2017 to last fall's class of 519 first years and transfers. This trend will continue in 2022 given a record number of first year deposits; Lake Forest was among three ACM institutions out of 14 to receive more first year deposits on May 2 than the prior year. Transfer enrollment, almost double any other ACM institution, has grown to more than 90 students. In addition, 30 plus students have enrolled for the spring semester.

The College has achieved this growth by improving its brand in the Chicago area; developing key pipelines through partnerships with community colleges, United World Colleges, and a Health Professions Program with Rosalind Franklin University; and adding men's and women's lacrosse.

While Lake Forest has been successful in growing headcount and total revenue, demographic and competitor challenges will only become greater in decades ahead. A shrinking percentage of high school graduates from 2026-2037, especially in Illinois (-21%) and the Midwest (-14%), will put tremendous pressure on net price and ANTR as colleges competitively bid on students' enrollment. Lake Forest is also committed to serving a socioeconomically diverse population, including roughly 30% Pell-eligible students who can make a minimal contribution towards educational costs.

To ensure the College's financial sustainability, the enrollment planning group determined that increasing total revenue remains the priority and that there are fewer headwinds to increasing headcount—or protecting market share—than ANTR. The committee discussed various growth options, including expanding existing cohorts, introducing new academic or athletic cohorts, and enhancing selected College offerings. Among these, nine options are provided (Figure 1).

### Enrollment Growth Options

The committee discussed initiatives that have helped grow enrollment to date, related alternatives, and their perceived cost and impact (net addition of students). Ideas not put forward included adding

kinesiology and baseball, expanding entrepreneurship, and considering distance learning. Becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution was deemed valuable, with less certainty about significant federal funding than as an imperative to better serve our community. With demographic trends and current recruitment strategies, meeting the 25% requirement for full-time enrollment will become a reality in years ahead, as evidenced by 26% of Fall 2022 first year deposits being Latinx.

The following growth options in the chart, with varied timelines and potential returns on investment, were deemed of interest. Brief considerations for each follow (needed support, interdependencies with other planning areas).

Figure 1. Nine Proposed Options for Increasing Headcount

Initiative	Impact	Cost	Timeframe
Nursing	Green	Green	Green
UWC	Green	Yellow	Green
Branding Internships	Yellow	Green	Green
Performance Groups	Green	Yellow	Yellow
E-Sports	Green	Yellow	Yellow
DEI Certification	Green	Yellow	Yellow
Cybersecurity	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Special Education	Green	Red	Red
Redesigning FIYS	Green	Red	Red

Green = High	Green = Low	Green = Short Term
Yellow = Medium	Yellow = Medium	Yellow = Intermediate Term
Red = Low	Red = High	Red = Long Term

Short-Term Options: Maximizing Current Cohorts or Offerings

- **Nursing:** seek to enroll 25-30 first year and transfer students annually—within several years of HLC’s approval of Rosalind Franklin’s nursing program.
  - This dual-degree program with RFU will help provide social mobility for local students interested in giving back to the community.
  - Admissions received 240 applications for Fall 2022 from students interested in nursing. The vast majority of applicants were underrepresented students from the area, a higher percentage interested in commuting to save costs.
  - Marketing, Community Partnerships, and high school outreach programs will be key in meeting program goals.
  - Academic and advising support provided by the Nursing Pathway Program Committee and Center for Academic Success will be key for retention goals. Students will represent multiple areas of major.
  - Cost includes additional faculty and course support.

- **UWC Students:** project 5-10 more students annually for a total of 65-70 per class.
  - Lake Forest has an excellent reputation among UWC schools, currently enrolling the highest percentage of UWC students per full-time enrollment of any college in the country. UWC students are strong academically and help support the financial well-being of the College.
  - Admissions will need to travel to select UWC campuses and host a UWC high school counselor visit program to protect market share. Competition from colleges has increased significantly given the Davis Foundation's more generous funding model.
  - Student Affairs will need support as they meet the needs of UWC students given recent and proposed growth (e.g., I-20 processing, counseling, post-graduate employment).
  - UWC students would benefit from guaranteed housing and meals during student breaks and an emergency fund for those with limited family support.
  
- **Branding Internships:** market internships with high-profile employer partners to remain competitive with other colleges' offerings.
  - Families have greater expectations for internships. The Career Advancement Center and the Partnerships Committee identified three to five Tier 1 partners in each pathway, those employers with a commitment to bringing on Lake Forest interns.
  - The Office of Communications and Marketing (OCM) and Admissions can promote students' internships with these partners. These will be great examples of the "Make It" brand.
  - Minimal costs include marketing and possibly funding selected internships with Tier 1 partners.

Intermediate Options: New Cohorts

- **Competitive Cheer, Poms, Dance:** would provide net student adds, 10-12 in one offering first year, 30-36 with the full complement.
  - Dance would attract Chicago-area students; cheer would attract students in growth markets out-of-state.
  - Small scholarships, as with the fine arts, would help with recruitment and yield. These offerings would be part of an existing financial aid package and not lower ANTR.
  - Three groups would require an investment of 1.5 coaches.
  - These performance groups would add to campus vibrancy.
  
- **E-sports:** net adds will be based on the number of teams or sports.
  - E-sports has been a popular addition at colleges.
  - Option of club or varsity would have to be evaluated.
  - Cost would include equipment, a room, and one paid administrator overseeing the program and recruiting—supported by student volunteer coaches for each team.
  - The administrator and small scholarships will help create and reinforce a strong culture. Scholarships underwrite existing financial aid funding, not to lower ANTR. Sport participation and scholarship renewal would be tied to a student's cumulative GPA.
  - Developing e-sports could extend to summer programming and additional revenue.
  - Net adds tend to skew male and STEM.
  
- **DEI Certificate Program:** can meet a need of area employees and strengthen employer relationships, while providing an educational offering that aligns with our institutional mission and core values.
  - This certificate could pull from a number of pre-existing courses across the curriculum.

- Courses would need to be taught in the evenings or on weekends. Virtual offerings could also be considered.
  - Appropriate faculty committees would need to approve such a program, including how to administer and allocate resources.
  - Should we need growth outside of our traditional market, this certificate program could become a model for other certificates that meet adult learners' needs (e.g., leadership) and highlight the College's offerings, strengths, and values.
- **Cybersecurity:** provides a boutique offering that can enhance student recruitment and outcomes.
    - Admissions will survey student interest and assess the potential effect on yield; 114 more students applied with computer science as an academic interest in Fall 2022.
    - Low cost and implementation depend upon a faculty member's interest and the development of several courses.
    - A concentration, which would be advantageous for admissions marketing and recruitment, would require appropriate academic approvals.

#### Long-term Options: Longer-Lead Programs and Institutional Branding

- **Education Department Offerings:** these students would be net adds for the College.
  - Admissions sees a growth opportunity from students interested in Education.
  - Potential areas of growth include Special Education, Early Childhood Education, ESL, Bilingual, and Educational Studies. Each one has a different appeal and levels of investment.
  - The Education Department would need to assess which direction(s) would offer the best return on investment based on prospective student interest, current curricular offerings and infrastructure (Education as well as other majors), curricular additions, and job demand.
  - The cost would be a full-time position(s) and curricular development.
- **Redesigning First Year Studies (FIYS):** create a new FIYS program around a common theme that differentiates Lake Forest.
  - A new offering must continue to provide skills essential to a student's transition and academic development.
  - A common theme could be threaded through four years. By maintaining their cohort, students would have a greater sense of belonging, social identity, and academic purpose.
  - A signature offering would provide an exciting branding and marketing opportunity, especially within our overarching "Make It" brand, that could help influence students to choose Lake Forest.
  - Creating a new FIYS would be a long-term academic planning endeavor.

#### Committee Members

##### *Faculty Members*

- Cassondra Batz-Barbarich: Assistant Professor of Business
- Jason Cody: Professor of Chemistry, Co-Chair of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- Enrique Trevino: Associate Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science
- Ben Zeller: Associate Professor of Religion, Chair of Religion, Chair of Islamic World Studies

### *Staff Members*

- Jim Catanzaro: Head Football Coach
- Mike Cohen: Senior Director of Admissions and Strategic Planning
- Chris Ellertson: Vice President of Enrollment
- Erin Hoffman: Associate Dean of Students
- Lori Sundberg: Vice President for Finance and Planning

### *Trustees*

- Marisue Lacher
- Martino Moore
- Steve Strelsin

## **Appendix A:**

### Enrollment Strategic Planning

Lori Sundberg, Vice President for Finance and Planning, shared highlights from four strategic planning efforts, from 2003 to 2013, focused on growing enrollment and ANTR. Ambitious headcount and ANTR goals were moderated over time. Progress was made in headcount, as the College grew from 1,325 students in 2003 to 1,657 students in 2021. ANTR remained largely flat since the 2008-09 recession. The first-year retention goal of 87% was met, and the graduation rate improved to 75%.

### The Enrollment Landscape

Paul Hamborg, who serves as an enrollment consultant for over 50 colleges and has worked with Lake Forest for seven years, provided the following context on enrollment challenges and pressures:

- Enrollment goals can be in conflict with each other—headcount, ANTR, academic profile, low-income, racial diversity—requiring institutions to clearly define its one or two priorities.
- Families have diminished ability and willingness to pay for higher education costs.
  - Nationwide, 41% of the families of 17-year olds have an income below \$50,000, while only 4% have an income over \$250,000.
  - Lake Forest serves a high percentage of low-income students given its local population in Lake County and Chicago. Among 24 top cross-applicant schools, the College is 7th in enrolling Pell-eligible students.
- ANTR has remained largely flat for colleges from 2006-2019, with the exception of highly selective private and public institutions.
  - ANTR grew by \$2,239 over 12 years for selective privates, Lake Forest's category, and \$2,500 for selective publics.
  - Lake Forest's ANTR is several thousand dollars higher than other selective private colleges' average ANTR. In addition, among 24 top competitors, the College ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in ANTR.
- Lake Forest has strong retention and graduation rates relative to Paul's clients, other Midwest schools, and the College's competitors. Among 24 top competitors, the College is 9<sup>th</sup> in retention and 6<sup>th</sup> in four-year graduation rate.
- The impending demographic cliff will change the enrollment landscape, seriously challenging many small private colleges. Paul anticipates a number of college closures within the next two decades.
  - High school graduates in the U.S. will decline by 10% from 2026-2037, by 14% in the Midwest, and by 21% in Illinois.

- Meanwhile, a larger cohort within the total college-going population will have less academic preparation and ability to pay.
- Lake Forest has a varied and challenging competitor set when compared with Paul's other 50 clients.
  - This reflects the College's location in the Midwest, with its abundance of institutions, and its varied pipelines of students and national and international draw.
  - The College's top competition is larger private and public state institutions: Loyola, DePaul, University of Illinois, UIC.
  - Out-of-state publics have increased their market share in Illinois, from 13.6% in 2008 to 20.1% in 2018.

Paul said Lake Forest was one of the few colleges among his clients to grow enrollment. He felt further growth within existing cohorts and pipelines would be challenging. Growing ANTR will be constrained by worsening demographic trends, increased competitor discounting, and the College's commitment to serving a socioeconomically diverse population.