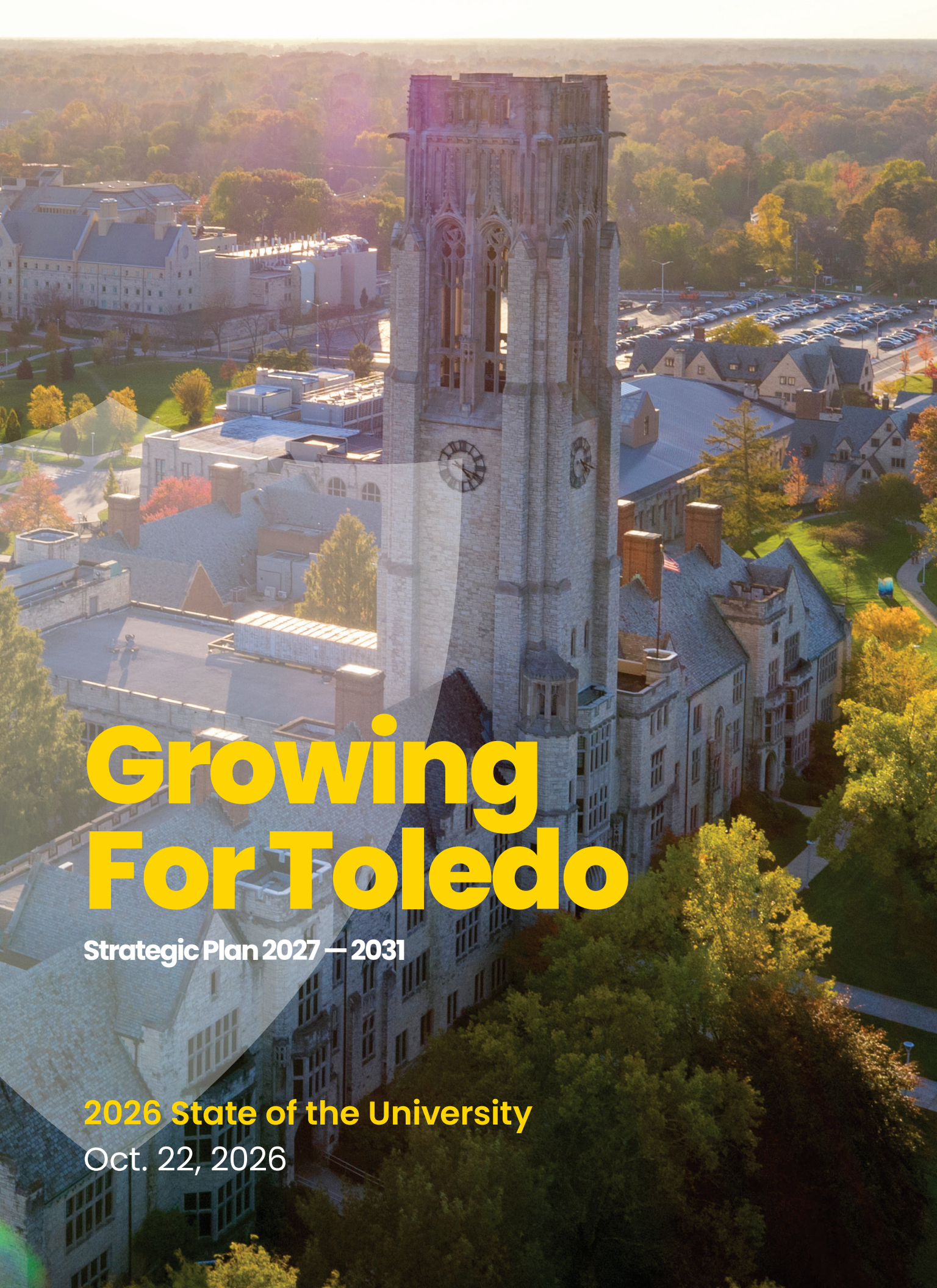


Growing For Toledo

Strategic Plan 2027 — 2031

2026 State of the University

Oct. 22, 2026



Watch introduction video.



James P. Holloway
President,
The University of Toledo

Thank you for being here today, and thank you for all that you do for our students, our patients and our University.

This University is important.

Proudly rooted in northwest Ohio, The University of Toledo prepares students for personal and professional success, expands human knowledge and capability, delivers exceptional, advanced care for patients, and drives innovation and economic growth for our region and beyond.

What we contribute to the great national project of higher education and health care is critical.

We help others achieve their dreams and advance their aspirations.

We assist our fellow humans towards healthier and fuller lives.

We make discoveries as close as our own backyards and as remote as the distant regions of the cosmos, discoveries that promote the prosperity of our neighbors, or develop an understanding of our place in the universe.

As Northwest Ohio's only R1 research university and only academic health system, discovery and service are not confined within our walls. UToledo faculty, students, and staff are exploring the universe's first stars, developing the means to detect disease before symptoms appear, creating cultural works that enrich our lives, advancing approaches to cancer treatment, and supporting businesses small and large to create jobs and grow our economy.

Our work is contributing to scientific progress and social understanding with broad impact for lives in Toledo and around the world.

For over 154 years UToledo has supported our region and grown to become an integral part of our city, with an annual economic impact of some 3 billion dollars, graduating 3700 students a year into the next phase of their lives and treating over a hundred thousand patients every year.

But this is not an easy time to be engaged in higher education or in health care. There is skepticism among many regarding the value of our work, and of our approach to it both philosophically and financially.

Developing the tools of critical thought is central to our work. And in 2002 David McCullough said *"Writing is thinking. To write well is to think clearly."* But the success of AI tools in mimicking thinking and writing has caused some to question the need for human expertise in teaching, let alone in research or even in health care.

The development of expertise is our core asset. Yet today, to some, expertise itself is suspect.

The willingness of society to subsidize our work has waned, and the methods by which higher education and health care are resourced are severely strained.

And these challenges to our mission are occurring at a time of broader social tensions within our nation and around the world. These stresses on our institutions of higher learning are not separate from, but are a part of, those broader challenges.

With the world changing around us, we cannot ourselves remain unchanged. We must be relevant, highly relevant, to the society that supports us and to the individuals which constitute that society. We must not stagnate, but instead must evolve to retain that relevance.

On July 4th in 1957 Eleanor Roosevelt wrote of the founders of the United States, that

"It was by living hard and courageous lives that these people tried to bring their dreams of liberty to reality, and this fact is a good one to emphasize today. It is the living that we do that still matters, and will matter in what we make of our country in the next few years."

And so, similarly, I would emphasize today that "it is the work that we do that still matters and will matter in what we make of our University in the next few years."

And you are all doing that work. In the classroom, in the laboratory, in the clinic, in the studio, every day, each of you instructs, discovers, treats, learns, creates or makes these things possible.

And your work is advancing us.

This fall we have seen an increase of just over 2% in new students entering our degree programs. Student persistence of the entering cohort of 2024 is at an all-time high and our graduation rate has reached a new record high as well.





In August we opened the Saloff Welcome Center, a new space designed so that every prospective student, family or visitor feels welcomed from the very first minute. And the Saloff Center is also a place that ensures every student seeking support at our one-stop has a positive, concierge experience from the moment they pass through the door.

The center carries the names of two of our own: Dorothy and Georgianna Saloff, sisters and UToledo alumnae who each spent more than four decades teaching in Toledo elementary school classrooms. Because of their generosity, every future Rocket will be welcomed through a door built by two teachers who never stopped believing in students.

We have come far since Dorothy and Georgianna attended UToledo. Today we have over 14,000 students studying in our classes, from every county in Ohio, from 35 states and from 35 different nations. Today we are one of only 3 universities in the state that are comprehensive R1 institutions with an academic medical system.

This year U.S. News and World Report once again named UToledo a Top Performer in Social Mobility. I'm proud of that.

We should be known for those whose climb we assist and for their accomplishments.

Some 34% of our undergraduate students are first generation, 29% use Pell grants to reduce their out-of-pocket cost and we invest over $50M in institutional aid each year. We are a school of access, where the children of the wealthy study alongside the children of the blue-collar line worker, where the children of Toledo study alongside the children of our international friends.

To educate well we know that a student should learn in an environment of discovery, in a place that is infused with learning, research, creation and open critique. Our mission as a research university provides us the means to deliver on our promise to serve this place, the northwest Ohio region that founded and supports us. As a place of discovery we are positioned to advance the economy, the health and well-being, and the cultural growth of our region and its people.

Thus, research, stretching from the fundamental understanding of the universe to the functioning of the factory floor is core to our purpose to ensure the success of our students and our society. And so this year we launched the Northwest Ohio Cancer Research Institute to accelerate research in basic cancer biology, cancer detection, diagnosis, treatment and translational research through collaboration among clinicians and scientists.

And our position as a research university also allows us to provide university quality care to our friends and neighbors in our clinics and hospital. Care that is informed and supported by the latest knowledge in biology, in medicine, in engineering, or in computer science. This is care that saves a child, allows a spouse to live a fuller life or gives a family more time to hug a loved one.

The excellence of our health care system has received national recognition this year, with the awarding of an A grade from the Lown Institute, which measures how well hospitals serve as community partners, equitable care providers and responsible employers. We are the only hospital in our region to receive this high grade.

We work in a complex health care market, but over this last year, owing to the amazing work of our health care providers and leaders, our health care market share has increased and we are serving more patients than ever before.

Our University is, and must be, one where disparate voices can be heard. We have been honored this year with Juneteenth performances of "Mojo" and "Watch Night Jubilee," performed in partnership with the New York Writers Series.

We hosted Pulitzer prize winner Thomas Friedman for the Edward Shapiro Distinguished Lecture, and continued our Perspectives series in partnership with the Toledo Blade, expanding our tradition of bringing leading intellectual voices to Toledo for public discussion of global issues, technology, economics and society.

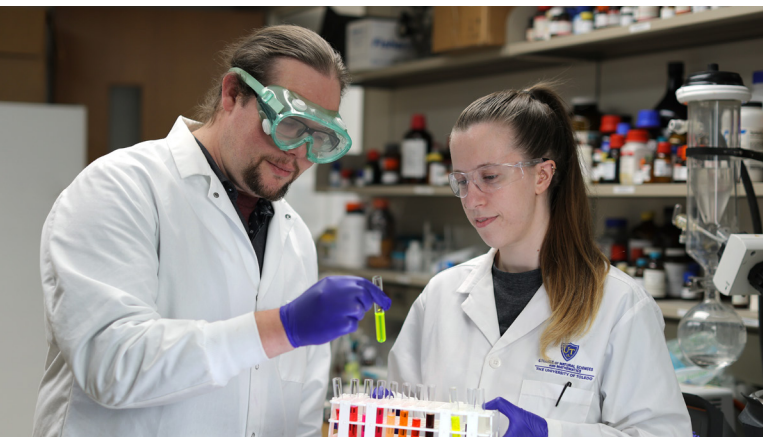
This is all incredible work and but a mere taste of all we have accomplished this year.

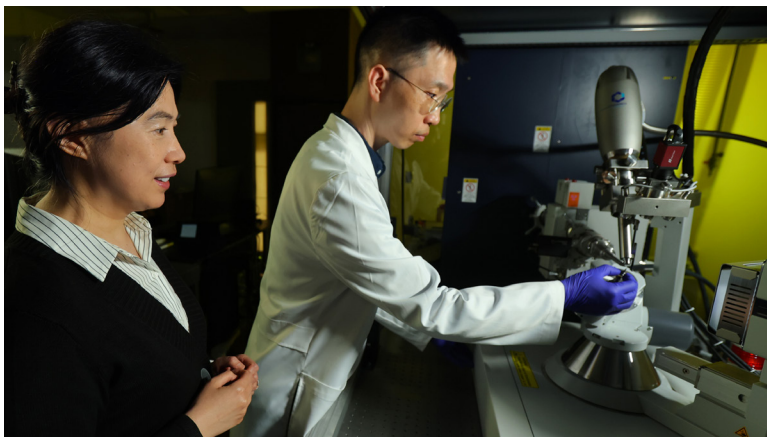
It's not always easy work, but our work, your work, does matter. Developing and advancing the gifts that nature has given to humanity, most especially our adaptable minds and our agile hands, is at the heart of higher education. No other social institution is centered on this critical effort.

We must not stand still, but must grow, not simply gaining size for the sake of size, but to expand the impact of our mission and to secure the resource capacity to continue the consequential results of our work.

We must move forward for those we serve. Our mission is important and no other institution in our region can pursue it. We have talented people and we must align them in a common cause to convert our opportunities into impact.







Our response to this moment must not be retreat or a reflexive retention of what remains. Nor must we passively wait for societal conditions to change or assume that we will change society to the benefit of our mission.

If our mission matters, then we must find a way to expand its impact and build the financial strength that sustains it, and we must do so with the tools we control, and not those we wish we possessed. This is the work of our strategic plan, Growing for Toledo.

At my inauguration last year, I framed the essential, core character of The University of Toledo around our purpose, our promise and our pride.

Our purpose: to provide education that is always centered on the professional success of our students after they graduate; **our promise**: that we would never forget and forever respect, that we were founded by Jesup Scott to support and advance this city and this region; and **our pride**: the pride that emerges from the extraordinary reach of our work: educating students, expanding knowledge, caring for patients, and driving innovation and economic growth, the pride that boasts about our extraordinary accomplishments.

Over the past year I've been listening, collecting ideas, sharing thoughts and vetting plans, regarding who The University of Toledo is, where The University of Toledo should go next, and how we will get there.

The Growing for Toledo strategic plan, approved by the Trustees and announced just four weeks ago is the answer to these questions. It begins with this:

The University of Toledo, proudly rooted in northwest Ohio, prepares students for personal and professional success, expands human knowledge and capability, delivers exceptional, advanced care for patients, and drives innovation and economic growth for our region and beyond.

This is our mission. You have heard versions of it since July 2025, for I've been testing it in many conversations and across many venues.

Each element of this mission is a purposeful statement of who we are, who we must be:

First: Proudly rooted in northwest Ohio — because we were established under a promise to advance this place.

Second: We prepare students for personal and professional success — because this has been our purpose from our founding and represents a special strength of our programs, and this is what our society requires of us.

Third: We expand human knowledge and capability — because we are an R1 research university, and we provide education and health care in an environment where knowledge is always new.

And next: We deliver exceptional care for patients — because our academic health system is uniquely able to provide university-quality care, the only health system in the region that can.

And finally: We drive innovation and economic growth — because as an R1 and home to numerous bright, creative, enthusiastic, and entrepreneurial faculty, students, and staff who are dedicated to our place, we can use our expertise to make an impact on the economy of the region that supports us in turn.

The Growing for Toledo plan is framed around the growth of this mission.

- **Growth creates opportunity.** More students in our classrooms, more access to higher education, more graduates expanding their own prospects and contributing to our region and nation.
- **Growth creates knowledge.** New fundamental research questions asked and new fundamental research questions answered, and new knowledge for application in support of our society.
- **Growth creates impact.** More neighbors cured in our clinics, more impact on the economy of our region, more lives improved and transformed.
- **Growth creates resources.** More students, more patients, more research. Each comes with an increase in the revenues that enable our mission, and without which there is no mission.

Through the Growing for Toledo plan we aspire to put our enrollment on a sustainable growth path, striving for a stretch goal of 16,000 students in our fall census of 2031, with somewhat more relative growth among our graduate student population. This goal is essential to enable the others, because our financial health as an educational institution depends on it.

Also by our plan we will achieve $100M in research expenditures annually, compared to about $76M today. Within this research portfolio we will have more interdisciplinary research, and more, large, team-based activity. This is where the national research portfolio has been headed for over a decade and we must become more competitive in this kind of grant development.

Our research portfolio must be more diversified as well. We need industry sponsored research, donor seeded support, and a broader set of state and federal funders.

Also within our plan is growth in our academic health system, expanding our reach to provide primary care for 140,000 people, about 40,000 more than we do today. We will expand access to new locations within the Toledo metropolitan area and reorganize service lines to more effectively serve patients in specialties where we have clinical strength.

Growing for Toledo includes a set of strategies and tactics designed to achieve these goals, organized into five strategic pillars, each with an executive sponsor responsible for mobilizing the University to execute those strategies.

These pillars, several of which you will recognize as echoes from in my inauguration remarks, are:

Realize the UToledo Advantage: Grow our enrollment by developing attractive programs, improving recruiting and retention processes, and making experience-based education for all the defining feature of a UToledo education.





Then… Drive Research & Innovation: Explore fundamental questions to expand human knowledge, and also pursue research inspired by the challenges and opportunities of our region.

Next … Build for a Healthy Toledo: Improve individual and community health through provision of university-quality care across Northwest Ohio.

Then… Engage Our Partners: Continually connect with the institutions, industries and individuals who support us and rely on our expertise.

And Finally… Optimize Our Institutional Systems: Continue to improve our systems of resourcing, budgeting, financing and institutional culture building.

Through the execution of the strategies and tactics organized under these pillars…

The University of Toledo will be the region's leader in learning, discovery and patient care, creating opportunity for northwest Ohio and the world.

You have probably heard about some of our strategies and tactics already, as we have already been busy implementing several them over the past year.

UToledo Advantage envisions that our students should not simply graduate with a degree. They should graduate with an advantage. Every student in every major, should graduate with an experience-based learning activity as part of their education. Across the nation, very few universities make this universal promise.

UToledo has long been a leader in this kind of education with clinicals, internships, co-ops, research placements and other experiences commonplace across our programs. And to help make this universal, the provost's office launched the ASCEND office this fall in support of our experience-based learning strategy.

Another key strategy to advance our goals was announced last week: the Rocket Research Acceleration program.

This cohort-based program provides multiple paths that reflect the movement of research ideas from initial discovery to a sustained research program. These are paths designed to advance a research idea towards the development of significant external funding and national research leadership.

Rocket Research Acceleration is designed to grow our capacity to develop these larger grants. And this is key: we are investing in capacity development, rather than simply in discrete projects.

In our health system we have submitted our application to become Northwest Ohio's first designated Magnet Hospital. This is an extensive process for strengthening our UTMC culture and processes to deliver evidence-based, high quality, patient-centered care. Magnet, once earned, will be

proof of our dedication to excellence in health care. This international designation is achieved by fewer than 1 in 10 hospitals in the United States.

To engage our partners, our athletics department has developed the Rocket Youth Sports League, offering high-quality, values-based leagues, camps and clinics for kids across Northwest Ohio. Launching with boys and girls flag football, this program builds confidence and leadership and uses our campus to build connections between UToledo and our community.

The University of Toledo Foundation is busy too, developing the One Degree Changes Everything comprehensive campaign and ensuring that we engage our donors through meaningful philanthropic relationships in support of UToledo.

And there is much we can do to optimize our institutional systems, and some strategies are already being executed.

- We have invested in marketing and recruiting to reach prospective students and patients.
- We have moved to reduce duplicative IT systems across our campuses.
- We are working to improve the operational performance of the health system, have invested in critical capital projects ranging from the Saloff Welcome Center, to improvements to our Cath Labs, to new linear accelerators for our Eleanor N. Dana Cancer Center, to the renovations of Scott and Tucker Halls.





- We have saved over three quarters of a million dollars per year from energy and sustainability efforts, and secured over $1M in funding to restore Swan Creek on our Health Sciences Campus.
- We are studying tuition sharing budgeting approaches for online programs and will reexamine our indirect cost attribution system.

These are only examples of the many strategies and tactics that are identified in the Growing for Toledo plan. I recognize also that we will develop other ideas as the plan moves through implementation over the coming years.

Our plan requires ambition and creativity but also discipline. Not every opportunity will fit our strategy. Not every project will justify investment. We must focus resources where they can make the greatest difference.

Growth is not automatic and it will not occur because we wish it so. This is why each of the five pillars comes with a set of tactics and strategies to advance the goals.

But we must also be a student-centered and patient-centered in all of our work.

Collaboration will be key. Trust, and a presumption of goodwill, is needed.

Overall, we require a willingness to embrace change. The approaches of the past will not suffice for the stormy present or the uncertain future.



A positive and optimistic outlook towards success will be essential. If we believe decline is inevitable, we will manage decline. But if we believe growth is possible, we will do the work required to achieve it.

Melinda Gates spoke once of optimism, and the core of her thesis was this: optimism is not the belief that success will be easy. Optimism is the conviction that our actions can change the outcome.

I'm optimistic that we can succeed. Not because conditions are easy, not because I'm complacent. I'm optimistic because we already see positive signs in place today. Student outcomes are improving. New students are coming to UToledo. Research momentum is building. Our market share in health care is growing.

I'm optimistic because our actions can change the outcome.

Our faculty and staff have already demonstrated, you have already demonstrated, resilience and commitment. So now is the moment to move boldly towards a future.

The University has a clear strategic direction and we are on our way to Growing for Toledo.

Like other research universities, UToledo is measured by enrollment, by research funding, by patient volumes, by athletic success and by financial performance. These metrics matter.

But ultimately, a great university is measured by the opportunities it creates, the lives it changes, the discoveries it makes and the communities it serves. Growing for Toledo is our commitment to be not just a university in Toledo, but The University FOR Toledo.

Our University began with a belief about what this place and its people could become. Today, we carry that belief forward through every student we educate, every discovery we pursue and every patient we care for.

The future of The University of Toledo will not be built by a plan. It will be built by people. It will be built by the faculty who inspire learning and lead discovery, by the staff who recruit our students and keep us operating, by the health care workers who treat the sick, by the students who place their trust in us and by the community that believes in our mission.

It will be built by you.

Together, we will grow for Toledo.