



**ROOTED &
GROWING**

Cultivating Excellence for GBSC

FALL 2024 UPDATE

For December 2024, the Strategic Planning Committee reports on progress in the following focus areas.

- Cultivate a culture of teaching and learning excellence
- Increase educational opportunities at the graduate level
- Modernize the campus user experience
- Enhance employee care

Cultivate a culture of teaching and learning excellence

Continue improvement of online courses

This year, our Course Designer has reviewed 7 of our online courses, and the faculty for those classes have already completed most of the recommended improvements. This includes three Tier 1 classes (highest enrollment/frequency) and four Tier 2 classes.

This initiative remains ongoing.

Launch Teaching and Learning Excellence Program

We have not yet launched the Teaching and Learning Excellence Program, so this initiative remains ongoing.

Progress in this area includes the following steps.

1. Faculty Week sessions covering aspects of learning/teaching excellence.
2. Launch of a microgrant program for learning/teaching projects; 2 grants were awarded this semester.
3. Held an AI Policy workshop, addressing how best to incorporate this new technology in learning/teaching.
4. Initial work to institutionalize peer review of teaching.
5. Publication of a scholarly collection of essays and sermons.
6. Regular recognition faculty members for excellence in teaching based on student nominations; each month has a different theme drawn from pedagogical research presented in the Faculty Handbook.
7. Personnel engaged in learning/teaching presentations and other work: an invited workshop on assessment at a conference; consultation with another college about SIS/LMS tools for online learning; invited workshops at another college's

conference; plenary presentation and workshop for youth leaders at a youth conference; invited review of a draft research article for a scholar at another college; review of an article for a scholarship of teaching and learning academic journal; invited feedback on a draft graduate-education policy for an accrediting agency; and a workshop on assessment for faculty development at another college.

Continue work on increasing coverage of practical skills/dispositions

Work in Fall 2024 in this area includes the pilot program for a new Honors Mentoring program in the Ministerial Education Division. Led by Dr. Steve Oliver, this program pairs upper-level Ministerial Education students with pastors and denominational leaders for mentoring activities focused on the practical skills of pastoral ministry.

Also in Fall 2024, Kendra Muir spearheaded a pilot project in an educational methods course, implementing a competency-based education approach with a single student participant. This course model, which includes a significant field experience component, emphasizes the development and application of essential skills and dispositions within a real-world classroom setting, under the guidance of an active teacher.

Increase educational opportunities at the graduate level

Work continues on a proposal for a new MA program. We plan to include in the same proposal a graduate-level certificate that would represent the start of the MA, so that students can earn a credential en route to the full degree. Additionally, we continue work toward another MA for the future. Both are slowed by staffing limitations.

We are also developing a post-baccalaureate teacher licensure program. This will not be graduate level, but will be another learning opportunity for BA holders.

This initiative is ongoing.

Continue library enhancement/development

Following a successful pilot of Student Hours with Faculty during the Spring 2024 semester, this initiative has been expanded. This fall, eleven faculty members and one staff member have participated in this approach to “open office hours,” which are currently scheduled Monday through Thursday each week; two of these groups are available to students in the Flexon Library.

Several enhancements have been made to improve user experience. These include a redesigned Flexon Library brochure, which refines user information and now aligns with GBSC's branding guidelines. Additionally, an infographic was developed to support access to library databases. There is increased signage throughout the library, streamlining access to the catalog via QR codes. To promote engagement, the Flexon Library designed an interactive "Battle of the Books" bulletin board in the month of September, inviting students and employees to cast their votes for books from two series: The Chronicles of Narnia and The Lord of the Rings.

This initiative remains ongoing, with some projects underway.

Enhance employee care

Onboarding for New Employees

We continued an enhanced onboarding process this fall. This year, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs collaborated on an additional orientation session, and new employees in both departments were assigned a mentor. Initial assessment (November 2024) suggests effective implementation; while new employees did not report high need or use of a mentor, they indicated that it was useful to have someone to ask any question that arose.

Review Employee Benefits

In response to concerns about ease of access to employee benefit data, the decision was made to create an Employee Care section of the GBSC Employee Handbook. This should ensure that employees know and can quickly locate information regarding their current benefits. This work is currently in progress with a target for completion in Spring 2025.

In Fall 2024, GBSC partnered with Servant Solutions to offer employees a retirement plan that includes employer contributions. This is directly in response to data collected both from the Best Christian Workplaces survey (Fall 2022) and an in-house survey from the President's Office (Spring 2024). Employee response has been significant and positive.

Increase alumni engagement

In Fall 2024, several steps have been completed in this area.

1. Homecoming 2024 saw excellent engagement, including with the benefit auction. This remains a signature alumni event.
2. We have contracted with a Christian company to develop an enhanced alumni directory. Due to technical problems with a third party, that work has been delayed. We believe it will be back on track soon.
3. We have begun work to add staffing focused on alumni engagement and relationships.