



Nicholls State University

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# Strategic Plan

2023-2028



**EXPERIENCE NICHOLLS**

*Louisiana's Coastal University*

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Jay Clune, Ph.D.

President  
Nicholls State University

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am proud to share with you “Experience Nicholls: Louisiana’s Coastal University,” Nicholls State University’s five-year strategic plan, covering the years 2023-2028. This strategic plan builds on the university’s legacies and traditions, articulates key goals for the next five years and establishes Nicholls State University’s path into the future.

This strategic plan is the result of many hours of work by members of the university community. From information gathering and analysis to an engagement in thoughtful discussion by faculty, staff, students, alumni and external constituents, this is a thorough and reasoned five-year plan that will take us into a growth phase for our university.

Bold and honest discussions and work sessions meant to spark new ideas produced refreshed versions of our mission, vision and value statements, as well as four pillars to serve as the foundation for experiencing Nicholls State University across all levels. I want to thank the faculty, staff, students, our foundation board and other community members for their continued dedication to this critical task. A special thank you is in order to Dr. Pam Northrup, who consulted and led the university community through this process.

We are at a pivotal time in our university’s history, and I look forward to building upon our successes in the next five years and beyond. As Louisiana’s Coastal University, it is our responsibility to continue the work to save our coast, our heritage and our culture. The strategic roadmap that follows will allow our university to continue standing as a beacon for progress, collaboration and academic excellence for the people of our service region and beyond.

On behalf of the university, thank you for your continued support.

## INTRODUCTION

At Nicholls State University, our strategic plan details how we prepare students for careers and life. We invest in our people and clearly define our goals, objectives and actions, all to have the greatest impact on our students and the communities we serve. We honor our strong Colonel culture and heritage in our 75th year of operation, while looking forward to the future where we will continue to welcome all students to live, learn, and work in our community. This plan is the result of extensive collaboration to set our vision, define our mission, and articulate a strategy for achieving goals that are consistent with the core values of the institution.

The goals and objectives of the University Strategic Plan are defined around four pillars. Each will guide our work as we aspire to provide an exceptional experience for our students and employees, offer a high-quality academic experience that leads students to careers and life, promote strong economic engagement across our community, and provide leadership in coastal restoration and recovery across Louisiana’s coastal communities and a model to coastal communities all over the world. Our foundational principles will provide stabilization and sustainability of our resources, a strong commitment to safety, and meaningful and consistent communications to all stakeholders both on campus and in the communities that we serve.



During the next five years, we will focus efforts in areas that align with our existing strengths and capitalize on emerging opportunities across our coastal communities. Our region has experienced shifts in the area’s economy due to fluctuations in the oil and gas industry, severe hurricanes, COVID-19 and coastal land loss. These shifts have impacted jobs and college student enrollments. To keep the region strong for current and future generations, Nicholls must remain vibrant, producing graduates to live and work in our coastal community, being an open door for those returning for graduate school and ongoing professional development and training, and working with our communities to build entrepreneurial solutions for tomorrow. Research, teaching, service, and industry partnerships represent pathways for Nicholls to leverage existing programs and assets and capitalize upon emerging opportunities to sustain and strengthen our region.



## MISSION

Nicholls State University prepares all students for careers and life in a spirited campus environment immersed in the Louisiana Coastal Community.

## VISION

We aspire to be the intellectual, economic and cultural heart of the Louisiana Coastal Community.

## VALUES

Nicholls State University supports values that promote citizenship, concern for self and others, and the desire for a better world by embracing its core values. Our core values include:

**Civic Engagement:** We use our time and talents to serve our community.

**Diversity:** We embrace unique perspectives that all individuals bring to the learning environment.

**Excellence:** We reach for the highest level of achievement in all activities.

**Integrity:** We expect fair-mindedness and truthfulness in all instances.

**Leadership:** As representatives of the university, we embrace our role as leaders.

**Respectfulness:** We respect the rights of others and are responsive to the needs of others.

**Responsibility:** We are accountable for our actions.

**Safety:** We cultivate a safe and secure environment free from harm conducive to unity and freedom of expression.

## HISTORY, CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

Built atop land of the historic Lafourche Delta in south-central Louisiana, Nicholls embraces an incumbent role in service to all communities and peoples living in the bayou region. Since opening its doors 75 years ago, Nicholls has been a pillar for documentation, interpretation, and preservation of regional history and culture. Now, as its service region endures rapid subsidence and land loss, communities and culture are at risk of extinction, making the incumbent service role of Nicholls as great as ever. Through curricular units across the university, as well as the Center for Bayou Studies, the Coastal Center at Nicholls State University, and Archives and Special Collections, Nicholls commits to strengthening its natural role of conservation leadership in the bayou region.

Nicholls is home to the Louisiana Center for Dyslexia and Related Learning Disorders, serving the community and Nicholls students. In the heart of the Bayou Region, Nicholls also is home to the Chef John Folse Culinary Institute, offering world class education through the only four year culinary degree program in Louisiana. As well, our degree programs are vibrant and strong, from the arts, to healthcare, business, education, social sciences, and STEM programs, we serve our region well and our alumni provide ongoing guidance and support carrying the Nicholls brand throughout our region, state, and world. Nicholls student experience is rich in tradition, from Colonel football, to pirogue races in Bayou Lafourche, to Crawfish Day, and many more. The university embraces and celebrates its unique location and the vibrant south Louisiana culture at the heart of the university.





# FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Along with our values, the foundational principles permeate every aspect of the institution and are addressed throughout this document. These principles support the people and places of Nicholls by ensuring a safe and financially stable living and working environment and a culture of open and effective communication.



## SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is the ability to maintain and support over time. Nicholls has sustained for 75 years and continues to provide a strong educational foundation to generations of proud alumni. To sustain our institution moving forward, Nicholls needs to grow and maintain a strong enrollment and find alternative sources of revenue to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world.



## COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place, person, or group to another. Good communication involves the ability to listen or read carefully, understand what is being said or written, and convey information to others accurately. Nicholls wants to grow in this fundamental skill to ensure our community is heard and well-informed.

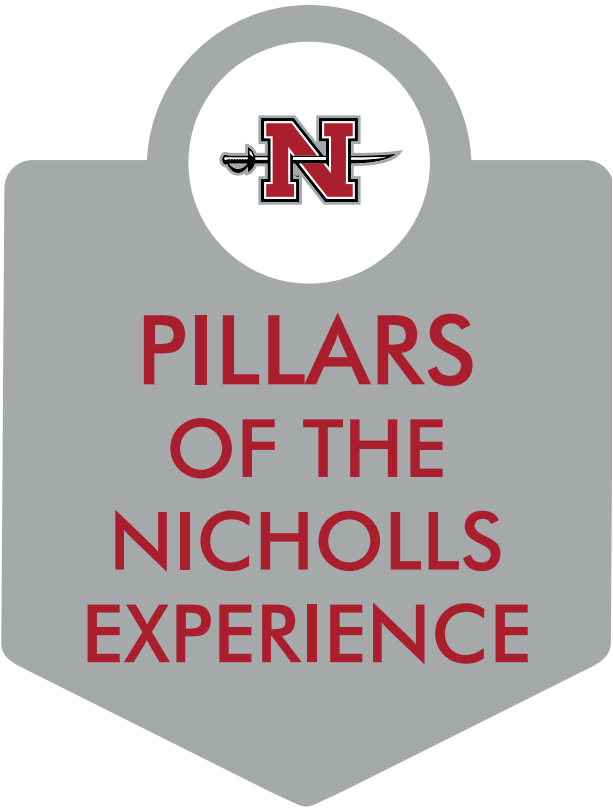


## SAFETY

Safety is being free from harm, loss, damage or injury. Safety is a sense of security to express one’s views without fear of retaliation. Emotional safety is the visceral feeling of being accepted and embraced for who you truly are and what you feel and need, willingness to reveal how you feel. Psychological safety is defined as feeling about expressing oneself without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career.

## PILLARS TO GUIDE OUR WORK

The goals and objectives of the University Strategic Plan are defined around four pillars that will guide our work and create an exceptional experience for students, faculty, staff and the community.





Nicholls is devoted to helping students reach their full potential and aspirations for the future. Through strong engagement with the institution, students are able to complete degrees and become active members of the communities we serve. Within the Colonel Culture, students will experience clear academic pathways, co-curricular experiences and effective services to address wellness, mental, and physical health, while gaining career readiness skills to prepare for life and career success.

**Goal 1:** Attract Students to Nicholls as a Distinctive Institution.

**Objective 1:** The University marketing team will develop and execute a strategic marketing plan that highlights the unique and distinctive qualities of Nicholls.

**Objective 2:** The University marketing team will clarify and promote a strong brand identity for Nicholls as a distinctive, unique higher education choice.

**Objective 3:** Nicholls will provide programs and facilities of distinction to become a first-choice institution.

**Goal 2:** Strengthen Academic Success by providing services, development, and clear paths to academic completion.

**Objective 1:** Support students' academic progress and degree completion by working with them to define a clear academic path and supporting them throughout their college career.

**Objective 2:** Support faculty development by growing professional development to equip faculty and staff to better effect student success.

**Objective 3:** Support development of the UL System Core Competencies in the student experience.

**Goal 3:** Provide and promote effective services that address wellness, mental and physical health of our students.

**Objective 1:** Provide and promote effective wellness support for students with services and programs addressing mental health.

**Objective 2:** Provide and promote effective wellness support for students with services and programs addressing physical health.

**Goal 4:** Develop career readiness skills in our students to prepare them for life and career success.

**Objective 1:** Develop skills for effective career decision making through awareness and programs.

**Objective 2:** Provide opportunities for professional growth and improvement through experiential learning to include internships, undergraduate research, service learning, field experiences and more.

**Objective 3:** Provide professional development and career support services for all students to help them become effective self-advocators of their value to future employers.

**Goal 5:** Promote the Colonel Culture to foster a sense of belonging, improve student engagement, and increase access to impactful co-curricular learning experiences.

**Objective 1:** Define and promote Colonel Culture to include athletic events, cultural events and all other campus activities as part of campus culture.

**Objective 2:** Expand access and promote opportunities for students to participate in co-curricular learning experiences while engaging with other students, faculty, staff, and external constituents.

**Objective 3:** Ensure the Nicholls community is a safe and secure environment.



Nicholls is an institution with a caring community culture. To ensure Nicholls as a continued employer of choice, we will focus on implementing robust policies, procedures and practices to ensure current and future employee satisfaction and institutional sustainability. We commit ourselves to achieving performance excellence and the continuous improvement of our people and processes.

**Goal 1:** Define Nicholls as an employer of choice.

**Objective 1:** Support initiatives to minimize employee work stress and help accommodate life's challenges.

**Objective 2:** Encourage and cultivate a work environment for all employees that promotes creativity, rewards excellence, and fosters high morale.

**Objective 3:** Develop a culture of trust while encouraging teamwork and accountability that upholds university integrity.

**Goal 2:** Cultivate a positive, welcoming work environment.

**Objective 1:** Cultivating a culture of diversity and inclusivity by ensuring policies and procedures provide equity throughout the university.

**Objective 2:** Encourage communication and promote a sense of community through collaboration across the university.

**Objective 3:** Commit to equity by ensuring policies and structures provide access to opportunities by addressing each person's needs and circumstances and improving outcomes for all.

**Goal 3:** Develop and implement employee professional development.

**Objective 1:** Develop and implement orientation in a digital format.

**Objective 2:** Support initiatives in providing opportunities for enhancement of skills and professional development.

**Objective 3:** Develop internal continuing education for supervisors that includes understanding their responsibilities, policies and procedures, and the impact they have on employees.

**Goal 4:** Increase and sustain communications with all stakeholders.

**Objective 1:** Improve internal communications to promote greater inclusion in decision-making, accountability at all levels, and more effective implementation of systems, policies, and practices.

**Objective 2:** Develop and execute a strong communications strategy to communicate the contributions and accomplishments of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and partnerships.

**Goal 5:** Optimize a sustainable and predictable business model to meet the needs of the people and the institution.

**Objective 1:** Develop alternative forms of revenue to support ongoing needs of the institution and enhance relationships with the region.

**Objective 2:** Execute sustainable budgeting model that enables responsible stewardship of all financial resources, including alternative revenue streams and enrollment strategies.

**Objective 3:** Develop and implement maximized profitability models for all academic, auxiliary, athletic, alumni, coastal, and other operating units.

**Objective 4:** Review framework and recommendations of Nicholls Online and the adjunct/overload pay schedule and make recommendations for sustainable budgeting.



## PILLAR 3: ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Nicholls provides academic degree programs that meet current and future needs of our coastal region, nation, and world. Success in these programs is led by faculty who teach, mentor, and guide students throughout their academic journey. As a result, faculty can improve student learning, prepare students to compete in the global marketplace and enhance student success by providing access to experiential learning opportunities with smaller class sizes that enable more personalized direction and support. In addition, Nicholls is committed to non-credit offerings that support professional and continuing education, focusing on employer needs along with creating opportunities to reskill and upskill professionals throughout a career.

**Goal 1:** Enhance existing degree programs to ensure they meet the needs of the region.

**Objective 1:** Conduct comprehensive reviews of all undergraduate and graduate degree programs and curricula and implement necessary changes.

**Objective 2:** Determine which existing undergraduate and graduate degree programs may be delivered online in addition to traditional on-campus delivery.

**Goal 2:** Create new degree programs to meet the needs of the region.

**Objective 1:** Investigate and implement opportunities for new undergraduate and graduate degree programs and concentrations.

**Objective 2:** Determine which new undergraduate and graduate degree programs and concentrations might be delivered online in addition to traditional on-campus delivery.



**Goal 3:** Establish non-traditional academic initiatives to meet the needs of the region.

**Objective 1:** Investigate and implement opportunities for academic initiatives outside of the traditional bachelor and master degree formats.

**Goal 4:** Increase and sustain a communications strategy that engages and informs the campus community.

**Objective 1:** The University Communications Team will improve communications to promote greater inclusion in decision-making, accountability at all levels, and more effective implementation of systems, policies, and practices.

**Objective 2:** The University Communications Team will develop and execute a strong communications strategy to communicate the contributions and accomplishments of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and partnerships.





## PILLAR 4: COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Nicholls is committed to strengthening regional engagement by serving as a strong partner with community members, area organizations, and companies. Nicholls experiences within the community are critical to ensure our impact extends far beyond our campus boundaries and into the daily lives of our coastal communities. We strive to develop mutually beneficial partnerships, initiatives, and economic engagement to incubate new opportunities for our future along with continuing to lead efforts in research and collaboration in coastal resilience and restoration. Through deep strategic relationships, we will distinguish ourselves as a valued partner and community resource.

**Goal 1:** Engage the community and region to create resilient coastal communities.

**Objective 1:** Support opportunities for enhanced faculty research, scholarly activity, and creative activity that includes student participation, contributes to effective student preparation, and fulfills community needs and encourages engagement.

**Objective 2:** Support development of the Coastal Center at Nicholls State University, activities of which will include research, education, and solutions to coastal problems along the Louisiana Gulf Coast, as well as community resilience and preservation of community history and culture.

**Objective 3:** Support efforts of the Bayou Region Incubator as it builds entrepreneurship, research, and development in the region.

**Objective 4:** Launch the Data Refinery supercomputer effort, designed to assimilate datasets from multiple sources and render it more usable in solving specific problems, such as protection and restoration issues associated with the Gulf Coast.



**Goal 2:** Develop mutually beneficial partnerships, initiatives, and economic engagement connecting Nicholls with the eight parish service regions and beyond.

**Objective 1:** Strengthen and expand K-16 partnerships to support college readiness, enrollment, and completion.

**Objective 2:** Measure, report, and promote economic impact to the university service region.

**Objective 3:** Promote workshops, certifications, and other mechanisms to expand public expertise to university responsiveness to regional needs.

**Objective 4:** Enhance promotion of arts, cultural, academic, and athletic events, as well as other activities as an integral part of campus culture.

**Objective 5:** Enhance relationships with alumni as ambassadors of the university.



## THE PROCESS

In the Spring of 2023, President Jay Clune formed the University Strategic Planning Steering Committee. Members were chosen to represent the campus and the community. Subcommittees were established to oversee the details within the plan's individual pillars.

During Spring 2023, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee focused on developing the University Strategic Plan to include revising the Mission, Vision and Values statements to reflect the focus of Nicholls in Louisiana's Coastal Community that maintains our culture and heritage and distinctive programs and research, while serving the needs of the community to create a welcoming, safe, and resilient future. The process included:

**Discovery.** The discovery phase included the major areas of planning and preparation, stakeholder engagement, and a campus survey. Initially, an environmental scan of Nicholls State University data, along with strategic direction from the University of Louisiana System-level core competencies for students, and the Louisiana Higher Education Master Plan, Louisiana Prospers from the Louisiana Board of Regents was conducted. Stakeholder engagement included:

- a series of 22 focus group sessions with students, staff, faculty, and the community;
- the "Future of Nicholls" visioning session with 85 attendees representing students, staff, faculty, and the community; and
- a campus survey with over 400 faculty, staff, and students completing the survey.

**Focus.** To focus all of the information gathered and represent the voices of the campus and community, the steering committee recommended priorities for the plan that were turned into pillars, goals, and objectives. The Steering Committee also made recommendations on updating the Mission, Vision, and Values. At the Writing Workday and in the weeks that followed, steering committee and subcommittee members finalized pillar goals and objectives.

The Strategic Plan was completed in May 2023 and presented to the University of Louisiana System in June 2023.

The University Strategic Planning Steering Committee includes:

**Renee Hicks**, Co-chair, Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, Access and Success and SACSCOC Liaison

**Dr. David Whitney**, Co-Chair, Department Head, Associate Professor, Political Science

**Dr. Pam Northrup**, Coordination of the Strategic Plan, Consultant on Strategic Initiatives

**Margo Badeaux**, Unclassified Staff Advisory Council and Executive Director of Auxiliary Services

**Jeremy Becker**, Executive Director, Nicholls Foundation

**Dr. Raj Boopathy**, Alcee Fortier Distinguished Service Professor, John Brady, Sr. and John Brady Jr. Endowed Professor, Biological Sciences and representing Research

**Claire Bourgeois**, Faculty Senate President, Health Sciences Program Coordinator, Assistant Professor of Communicative Disorders

**Courtney Cassard**, Executive Director of Enrollment Services

**Lacey Crochet**, Special Projects & Outreach Specialist, Office of the President

**Jerad David**, Director of Communications

**Dr. John Doucet**, Dean of Sciences and Technology, Alcee Fortier Professor, Distinguished Service Professor and representing Coastal Initiatives

**David Heltz**, Alumni Federation Board President

**Dr. Todd Keller**, Vice Provost

**Dr. Janice Lyn**, Dean of Students, Student Affairs

**Tyler Legnon**, President, Student Government Association

**Tancy McCarth**, Classified Staff Advisory Council

**Ray Peters**, Assistant Vice President for Advancement

**Dr. Tommy Ponson**, Director of Compliance, Conduct and Accountability and Ethical Development

**Jennifer Schulte**, Director of Athletic Academic Services

Subcommittee Members include:

**Student Success:** Renee Hicks, Chair, Katherine Mabile, Amy Hebert, Cambria Bouzigard, Kaisa Young, Alaina Daigle, Kathryn Slosarek, Adrienne Naquin-Bolton, Tyler Legnon, and Jax Badeaux. (Pillar 1)

**Employee Engagement:** Margo Badeaux, Chair, Tommy Ponson, Bridget Coddou, Alison Hadaway, and Paulette Mayon. (Pillar 2)

**Academic Engagement:** Allen Alexander, Chair, Claire Bourgeois, Luke Cashen, James Stewart, and Heather Gamel. (Pillar 3)

**Sustainability, Research, and Entrepreneurship:** John Doucet, Chair, Lacey Crochet, Ray Peters, Monique Crochet, Liz McCurry, Jeremy Becker, Hillary Charpentier, and Channing Parfait. (Pillar 2 and Pillar 4)

**Communication and the Nicholls Experience:** Jerad David, Chair, Dr. Todd Keller, Whitney Hicks, Kristen Anselmi, and Katie Martin (foundational across all pillars)

## STRATEGIC PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Recommendations include appointing a University Strategic Planning Implementation Committee that will ensure we actively pursue the goals and objectives of the plan along with monitoring dashboards and annual progress reviews. The Committee will oversee the continued work of the pillar-level subcommittees that were formed during the planning process to support building out specific tactics and initiatives to support the plan.

As specific tactics and initiatives are identified and launched, we will remain flexible and as an institution, we may add new initiatives and re-prioritize in ways that support our plan, as conditions and needs may change throughout the process.

Nicholls State University adheres to the equal opportunity provisions of federal civil rights laws and regulations that are applicable to this agency. Therefore, no one will be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972); disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; or age (Age Discrimination Act of 1975) in attaining educational goals and objectives and in the administration of personnel policies and procedures. Anyone with questions regarding this policy may contact Alison Hadaway, SHRM-CP, Director of Human Resources at 985-448-4041 / alison.hadaway@nicholls.edu / P.O. Box 2105, Thibodaux, LA 70310. For anyone needing ADA Accommodations, please contact Brian Clausen, Director of Environmental Health & Safety at 985-448-4783 / brian.clausen@nicholls.edu









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