



STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023

Preamble

“Truth Transforming Life and Practice”

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategic Plan (the Plan) is the outcome of a number of years of discussion, reflection and analysis, and has been undertaken as a participatory exercise involving the Board of Management and Executive Team. Further input has also been provided by faculty, staff, current and past students, supporting constituency, and partner organisations.

- The Plan will provide a strategic framework for the Board of Governance in the execution of its governance responsibilities, and to the Executive Team in the operational and academic leadership of Eastern College Australia (ECA).
- The Board will routinely and systematically review the Strategic Plan each year, and will regularly allocate time each meeting for analysis, reflection, and review of various aspects of the Plan.
- The Executive Team and Principal will also benchmark key executive and operational decision-making against the Plan, and provide regular reports to the Board on outcome measurements and performance indicators.

2. SCOPE OF THIS PLAN

This strategic plan is intended to provide a framework for academic, community and governance decision-making and planning for THREE years (2020 – 2023) with regular review.

3. MISSION

Eastern College Australia provides teaching, training and research from a Christian worldview that serves the Christian church and contributes to human flourishing through the transformed lives of its graduates

4. VISION

Eastern College Australia aspires to be internationally recognised for university-quality education from a Christian worldview in a vibrant spiritual community.

5. VALUES

Faith

ECA is a community committed to embodying Christ-centred, biblically-based, character-forming and gift-affirming faith, expressed in vocational living, and prayerful participation in God's mission through the Christian church, in service to humanity and its own stakeholders.

Reason

ECA is committed to the pursuit of knowledge and truth from a Christian worldview, valuing relevant academic excellence, critical and creative thinking and life-long learning that integrates theory and practice.

Justice

ECA, as a community, is committed to acting justly in all human relationships, exercising responsible care and stewardship of God's creation, and implementing God's vision for the transformation of the world.

6. HISTORY

a. A charismatic Bible college

Tabor College was established in Adelaide by the Christian Revival Crusade (now CRC Churches International) in 1979. Tabor Melbourne began in 1988 with Dr Ian Richardson, the founding principal. It operated as a separate entity to Tabor Adelaide, an interdenominational evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal college, but used a common curriculum. The college had humble beginnings, with a library of a single crate of books and classes in rented premises in Blackburn and then North Fitzroy.

Following continued growth, the college established a long-term rental agreement and relocated in 1993 to premises in Ringwood North. This remained the college's home until December 2010. This period was characterised by innovation. For example, Tabor Victoria was one of the first Australian bible colleges to offer classes morning, afternoon and night. As a non-residential college, students mostly studied part-time and took advantage of evening and weekend classes while they worked. The college experimented with annexes at Berwick, Geelong, Sunshine and Mildura. To represent this geographic diversity, the College changed its name to Tabor Victoria.

b. An expanded curriculum

The College developed its own curriculum and became independently accredited during this time at Ringwood North. The college expanded its offering beyond Biblical Studies, Ministry and Counselling into Intercultural Studies, Arts and Education. New programmes were added as government accreditation was received, and in 2005 Tabor Victoria became an independent Higher Education Provider. There was an expansion from certificates to degrees and post-graduate awards. This was reflected in a growing student body, with more than 500 enrolled students in 2005. Faculty, staff and student numbers grew, along with the library and physical resources.

With the lease on the Ringwood North property ending in December 2010, Tabor Victoria relocated to Jacksons Road, Mulgrave, where property and resources were shared, at the invitation of the then Churches of Christ Theological College (now Stirling College). Classes commenced at the new location in February 2011 and continued until December 2017. In August 2015, Tabor Victoria, with a view to strengthening its independent identity, changed its name to Eastern College Australia (ECA).

c. Collaboration with Melbourne School of Theology

ECA announced the formation of a significant new partnership with MST (Melbourne School of Theology) in 2017. As collaborating Colleges, located at MST's site in Wantirna, both Eastern and MST retain their separate identities, and offer distinctly accredited courses and awards.

MST continues to offer training in Theology, Biblical Studies, Mission and Ministry, from Diploma to Doctorate awards, while Eastern continues to offer high quality Vocational Education Training (VET) and Higher Education in Christian Foundations, Aid & Development, Community Development, Counselling, Education, Social Sciences and Youth Work - from Certificate to Masters levels.

d. Transforming Community

From humble beginnings, ECA has grown into a College that reflects a wide range of Christian traditions. It has matured over time into an organisation that interprets contemporary cultural and spiritual trends whilst retaining integrity with Christian truths.

The College community is vibrant, committed to life-embracing scholarship as an act of worship. It aspires to forming creative and influential thought leaders and practitioners who engage the church, society and the marketplace. Through its teaching and learning activities, the College seeks to empower, transform and equip people for Christian life and witness. In embracing the themes of academic excellence and spiritual relevance, the College seeks to graduate spiritually integrated, resourceful and enterprising people. Thousands now serve in a wide range of areas across the world, utilising a diversity of skills as they contribute to church and society.

7. ASSUMPTIONS

We must:

a. Be viable & grow

Eastern College Australia is a not-for-profit organisation. However, we are also a not-for-loss organization. This presumes, therefore, that the business plan and economic platform upon which we rest must be fundamentally sound. We must earn a sufficient financial surplus each year that allows us to reinvest in people, process and premises to ensure we are able to fulfil our purpose on an enduring and long-term basis.

We will continue to integrate into the Plan an element of 'donor support. However, these must be primarily viewed as enabling additional development in strategy, and not critical to operational viability. We will therefore be measured in our reliance upon gifts and donations.

b. Build on the past while focussing on the future

We are thankful for the rich history, and abundant blessing of God over many years. Being relevant in a highly competitive educational environment does not mean compromising our commitment to traditional biblical and theological education, with depth and rigor. It does demand, however, that we need to ask ourselves consistently: Does what we teach, the way we teach, and the expectations we have of our graduates reflect the needs, challenges and opportunities that are relevant to our times?

c. Understand, and strengthen our distinctives

There are few interdisciplinary Christian Higher Education Providers in Australia. We therefore need to know, reinforce, articulate, and celebrate the elements that make us unique, and use these to create new opportunities to attract students, grow our profile, and expand our sphere of influence.

Christian higher education is still in its formative stages in Australia and, as such, will require nurturing and resourcing to bring it to maturity. ECA therefore plans to form stronger relationships with stakeholders to ensure the goals for the next three years are met. The collaborative relationship with Melbourne School of Theology is central to this strategy.

8. EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

ECA's vision for a truly multi-disciplinary expression of the Christian worldview in a range of vocations, is the heart of the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. It seeks to deliver high quality courses and faculty who are committed Christians in an academic environment that meets all HESF standards for higher education and RTO standards for vocational courses..

Our core philosophy is a faith integration model that articulates the formation of a Christian worldview based on the biblical narrative, which resolves any compartmentalization in our lives. This model has been extensively used in the Christian Schools movement and most Christian Higher Education Providers in Australia

ECA holds strongly to the "Christ-transforming Culture" approach – involving all areas, neither rejecting nor accepting unthinkingly all that culture offers. The role of ECA's Christian higher education is not to isolate or protect students from a threatening world, nor to offer an indoctrination into a particular Christian sub-culture. The task is to integrate faith and knowledge in chosen disciplines alongside the promotion of healthy spiritual formation. We understand the role of Christian Higher Education as assisting students to be excellent in their chosen discipline, to transform their worldview and character, and prepare them for their vocation.

Eastern is aiming ultimately at Self Accrediting Authority status. This shapes our strategic planning.

9. GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES (Revised 11 October, 2021)

1. Know, experience, and understand the importance of biblically-informed faith and worldview in human identity and the formation of character.
2. Have the confidence to engage intellectually and respectfully with alternate worldviews, and the values and perspectives of others
3. Have attained excellence in evidence-based, contemporary knowledge and professional competencies in their chosen field of study for vocational calling.
4. Exhibit intellectual curiosity, passion, and agility, valuing life-long learning and thought leadership.
5. Demonstrate critical thinking, reflection, analysis, and communication skills.
6. Exhibit Christ-like humility as innovative and creative individuals equipped to be a transformative influence in an interdependent world.
7. Contribute to society as responsible global citizens with a commitment to social justice, environmental stewardship, and Christ-like compassion.

10. GOALS

In the next three years Eastern College Australia will:

1. Maintain excellence in learning, teaching and research among students and teaching staff.
 - 1.1 Provide appropriate professional development and research opportunities for teaching staff to enhance competence in their disciplines and in learning and teaching.
 - 1.2 Ensure graduates are intellectually and vocationally equipped in their chosen discipline.
 - 1.3 Ensure a Christian/biblical worldview is integrated into the structure and delivery of all courses.
 - 1.4 Provide diverse and flexible learning communities, sound pedagogical approaches and effective means of student engagement.
 - 1.5 Provide courses in multiple disciplines from certificate to master level.
 - 1.6 Provide a supportive student experience
 - 1.7 Collaborate with MST in the delivery of mutually beneficial courses and/or units of study
2. Maintain a spiritually-vital community with strong Christian values.
3. Ensure high quality systems of governance, administration and operations in an environment of continuous quality assurance and innovation.
4. Establish and maintain financial sustainability and stability to assure College goals are achieved.
5. Ensure readiness to seek Self-Accrediting Authority.
6. Collaborate with MST to rationalise and improve the administration and operations of both Colleges.
7. Forge closer relationships with stakeholders, community groups, peak bodies, accrediting agencies.