Colby·Sawyer College



Charging Ahead

Colby-Sawyer College Strategic Plan

February 18, 2026

Colby-Sawyer College stands at a pivotal moment in its history.

As higher education continues to evolve — shaped by demographic shifts, new learning technologies, and changing workforce expectations — Colby-Sawyer is uniquely positioned to prepare the next generation of engaged citizens and leaders who will shape the future of our region and beyond.





Dear Friends,

I'm excited to present Colby-Sawyer's strategic plan for 2026–2029. Our plan reflects insights from more than 500 people and organizations who care deeply for our college — including students, alumni, faculty, staff, trustees, and community partners.

This roadmap is rooted in our noble traditions. And it is transformational.

Our plan's four primary goals and accompanying strategies provide direction for expanding educational access, attracting and retaining the most talented employees, promoting student success, reimagining programs and partnerships, and being an inspiring place to convene, study, and address community needs.

A willingness and ability to change have been baked into this resilient institution's DNA for nearly two centuries — as a town academy, junior college for women, four-year-college for women, and coeducational institution. This strategic plan positions our beloved college on the hill to be vital and vibrant.

When you read the plan, I hope that you are as eager as I am for these next three promising years. And beyond.

In developing our new strategic plan, Colby-Sawyer engaged Schunk Moreland Strategies (SMS) as our consulting partner. SMS designed an inclusive and iterative process that brought together diverse voices from across campus and the broader community to shape a plan that is both visionary and achievable.

It is an honor to be part of this caring and dynamic college community. Thank you to all who have taken part in this important process. Now, let's bring this thoughtful and intentional plan to life!

All the best,

Dean G. McCurdy, Ph.D.

President and Professor of Arts & Sciences
Volanakis Family Presidential Chair

Strategic Planning Committee:

Dean McCurdy (co-chair) • Dan Parish (co-chair) • Karen Bonewald • Dan Howard • Jim Killarney
Jon McCosh • Jen McKillop • T.J. Smith • Valeri Wallace • Hilary Williams



Mission

To offer undergraduate and graduate educational programs based in the liberal arts and health, social, and natural sciences, with a focus on vocational exploration and experiential learning, which prepare students to thrive in, and make a positive impact upon a dynamic, diverse, and interdependent world. Engaged robust partnerships will support students' academic, intellectual, personal and professional growth, align with workforce development needs, and enhance individual and community well-being and resilience.

Our strategic planning process focused on 4 key objectives:

1. **Gathering broad input** from those who know and shape Colby-Sawyer every day. SMS facilitated input sessions, one-on-one thought leader interviews, and stakeholder surveys to capture insights from faculty, staff, college leadership, students, alumni, and community partners.
2. **Defining leadership vision** to clarify where Colby-Sawyer wants to be in the next three years and what role the college will play in advancing student success, institutional vitality, and community impact.
3. **Identifying common themes and insights** from the strategy input sessions to ensure alignment across academic programs, student experience, operations, and community engagement.
4. **Creating a Strategic Challenge Map** with college leadership, faculty, and staff — using the vision for the future and the insights gathered — to identify opportunities, clarify priorities, and build the roadmap that will carry Colby-Sawyer from "today" to "tomorrow."

This strategic plan for Colby-Sawyer College was developed through the ClearView Process, Schunk Moreland Strategies' structured and inclusive approach to planning for impact. The goal was to bring together diverse voices, clarify a shared direction, and build a plan that is both visionary and practical.

We started by **listening and learning**. Through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and document reviews, we heard directly from students, faculty, staff, current and former trustees, and community partners. More than 500 participants contributed to this phase, offering honest insights about what's working, where gaps exist, and what's needed to grow.

Next, we moved into **mapping and alignment**. Through a series of strategy sessions, stakeholders co-created a framework for CSC's future. These conversations clarified what matters most, identified key goals, and aligned the organization around a unifying vision — one that builds on current momentum while pushing toward greater excellence.

With that shared direction in place, we **shaped the plan**. We translated ideas into clear strategies and defined bold yet achievable priorities. The plan includes measurable goals and a practical roadmap for implementation.

Finally, we turned our focus to **activation**. A strategic plan only drives change if it's used. That's why this plan includes recommendations for immediate next steps, accountability structures, and tools for tracking progress over time.

This plan reflects the voices, values, and aspirations of the people who power CSC every day. It's more than a document — it's a commitment to continuous growth, shared purpose, and a culture of excellence.

GOAL 1

Deepen the Student Experience

Objective

Cultivate a holistic, inclusive, and engaging student experience that supports academic achievement, personal growth, and lifelong connection to the college.



Strategy 1

Strengthen the learning environment through innovative, hands-on, and immersive experiences that prepare students for real-world success.

Approach

- Enhance existing signature experiences — and develop new ones where needed — to create a cohesive portfolio of applied learning opportunities that are clearly articulated, widely promoted, and differentiated in the market.
- Expand experiential learning pathways (e.g., research, creative work, externships) and promote cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- Create a summer program for student scholarship and creative work to extend engagement beyond the academic year.

Strategy 2

Foster a deep sense of belonging by recognizing and responding to the needs of all students, ensuring every student feels valued and engaged.

Approach

- Launch a structured feedback loop to regularly capture and act on student opinions about campus life, belonging, and engagement.
- Expand faculty and staff training focused on supporting students' social and emotional needs and diverse learning experiences.
- Consider community-building structures that support meaningful peer connections while maintaining campus-wide interaction and a shared student experience.
- Revamp student onboarding and orientation to create a high-touch, personalized experience that fosters belonging and connection prior to "Day One."

Strategy 3

Enhance the student living environment to promote comfort, connection, and well-being.

Approach

- Redesign residential spaces and common areas to support social connection, wellness, and study-life balance.
- Partner with dining and hospitality services to reimagine the dining experience, offering flexible, community-centered options that encourage on-campus engagement.
- Create signature events to incentivize attendance at athletic games and events, student performances, and other on-campus student events throughout the year.
- Increase programming and partnerships with local businesses to expand off-campus social and recreational opportunities and enhance the "12-month campus" experience.

Strategy 4

Cultivate lifelong connection by viewing every student as a future alum — building engagement, loyalty, and investment that continue long after graduation.

Approach

- Integrate alumni mentors into student programs, connecting undergraduates with graduates in relevant career fields.
- Establish pre-graduation traditions and recognition events that reinforce students' lifelong identity as part of the Colby-Sawyer community.
- Develop collaborative experiences between current students and alumni to foster early alumni engagement (e.g., projects, panels, volunteer initiatives, co-curricular activities and athletics).

GOAL 2

Strengthen and Support Our People

Objective

Cultivate a collaborative, student-centered culture that strengthens and supports every employee through personal and professional growth, strategic focus, and role clarity.



Strategy 1

Cultivate a welcoming, collaborative, and student-centered culture that supports every employee.

Approach

- Strengthen and expand orientation and onboarding programs to ensure every employee receives consistent, comprehensive support from Day One.
- Focus on proactive communication and engagement among different areas of the college.
- Connect day-to-day work to the mission and strategic goals of the college.
- Celebrate innovative collaborations that advance student success, including faculty and staff support for and mentorship of student clubs, activities, and athletic teams.

Strategy 2

Develop opportunities where faculty and staff can grow through career advancement and professional development.

Approach

- Guarantee equitable training and development for employees at all levels.
- Create a formal mentorship program for faculty, staff and students that supports career growth, skill development, and leadership readiness across all levels of the institution.
- Implement a merit-based performance system that links achievement to career advancement opportunities.
- Establish a formal succession planning process to identify, develop, and prepare internal talent for future leadership roles.

Strategy 3

Build organizational capacity through strategic focus and role clarity.

Approach

- Identify and proactively communicate the strategic priorities of the college.
- Invest in modern and intuitive technology: Understand the current capacity constraints and invest in systems to support process improvements across the college.
- Align our organizational structure to our strategic priorities.

Strategy 4

Develop a plan to ensure that employee compensation and benefits become competitive in the higher education marketplace and within the region.

Approach

- Identify and report on relevant comparison groups for compensation and benefits benchmarking.
- Develop a spot bonus program and merit adjustment process to recognize outstanding service and performance.

GOAL 3

Reimagine our Academic Portfolio

Objective

Build a dynamic and future-ready academic portfolio that anticipates workforce needs, leverages institutional strengths, and ensures every student is prepared to thrive in a rapidly changing world.



Strategy 1

Strengthen and sustain our core academic offerings to remain relevant and essential, regardless of external change.

Approach

- Conduct regular and comprehensive program portfolio review to identify high-performing, mission-critical programs for investment and support.
- Integrate interdisciplinary learning experiences across all core programs to reinforce liberal arts strengths while increasing adaptability.
- Highlight and market success stories of graduates from existing programs to showcase the enduring value and outcomes of a Colby-Sawyer education.
- Reinforce the liberal arts core by integrating foundational skills — critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving — across all programs to ensure graduates are adaptable and future-ready.

Strategy 2

Optimize internal processes to accelerate program development, bringing new offerings to market faster than competitors and keeping students at the center of innovation.

Approach

- Implement a clear, data-informed decision-making framework using workforce analytics and enrollment projections to guide new offerings.
- Streamline curriculum development and revision workflows — reducing administrative barriers, focusing on the expertise of faculty, and enabling faster responses to emerging market needs.
- Adopt new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence to enhance college operations and prepare students for technology-rich career environments.

Strategy 3

Expand into a diverse set of programs designed to meet lifelong learning needs and advance workforce development.

Approach

- Develop flexible micro-credentials and certificates in emerging fields (e.g., healthcare leadership, sustainability, data literacy) aligned with regional workforce needs.
- Launch a Continuing Education and Workforce Development hub to coordinate partnerships, program design, and marketing for nontraditional learners.
- Leverage online and hybrid delivery formats to expand accessibility for adult learners, alumni, and working professionals seeking reskilling opportunities.
- Expand concurrent enrollment and transitional pathways for high school students to keep core academic offerings relevant and resilient.

Strategy 4

Forge strong bridges and collaborations with other academic institutions and community partners to broaden opportunities, increase enrollment, and enhance academic breadth.

Approach

- Create agreements with peer institutions and employers to attract diverse learners and enhance student outcomes.
- Partner with local and regional employers to co-design internships, applied research, and experiential learning programs that prepare students for the future workforce.
- Enhance Colby-Sawyer's partnership with the Dartmouth Health system and ensure mutually beneficial outcomes for the college and the health system well into the future.

GOAL 4

Secure our Future

Objective

Build a sustainable foundation that ensures long-term financial stability and institutional resilience, securing our future for generations to come.



Strategy 1

Increase enrollment strategically in key programs.

Approach

- Create a clear value proposition statement focused on our diverse story to promote Colby-Sawyer College.
- Maximize the 12-month calendar to expand opportunities for enrollment and college engagement.
- Elevate our brand across the region's professional communities.

Strategy 2

Expand and diversify revenue sources to reduce reliance on tuition.

Approach

- Develop tactics to engage our community partners and measure this engagement annually.
- Expand non-academic sources of revenue through community offerings such as space rental, events, and the Hogan Center.
- Explore expanding signature student experiences to other populations, including attendance at athletic events, student performances and annual events.

Strategy 3

Expand philanthropy and grow our endowment.

Approach

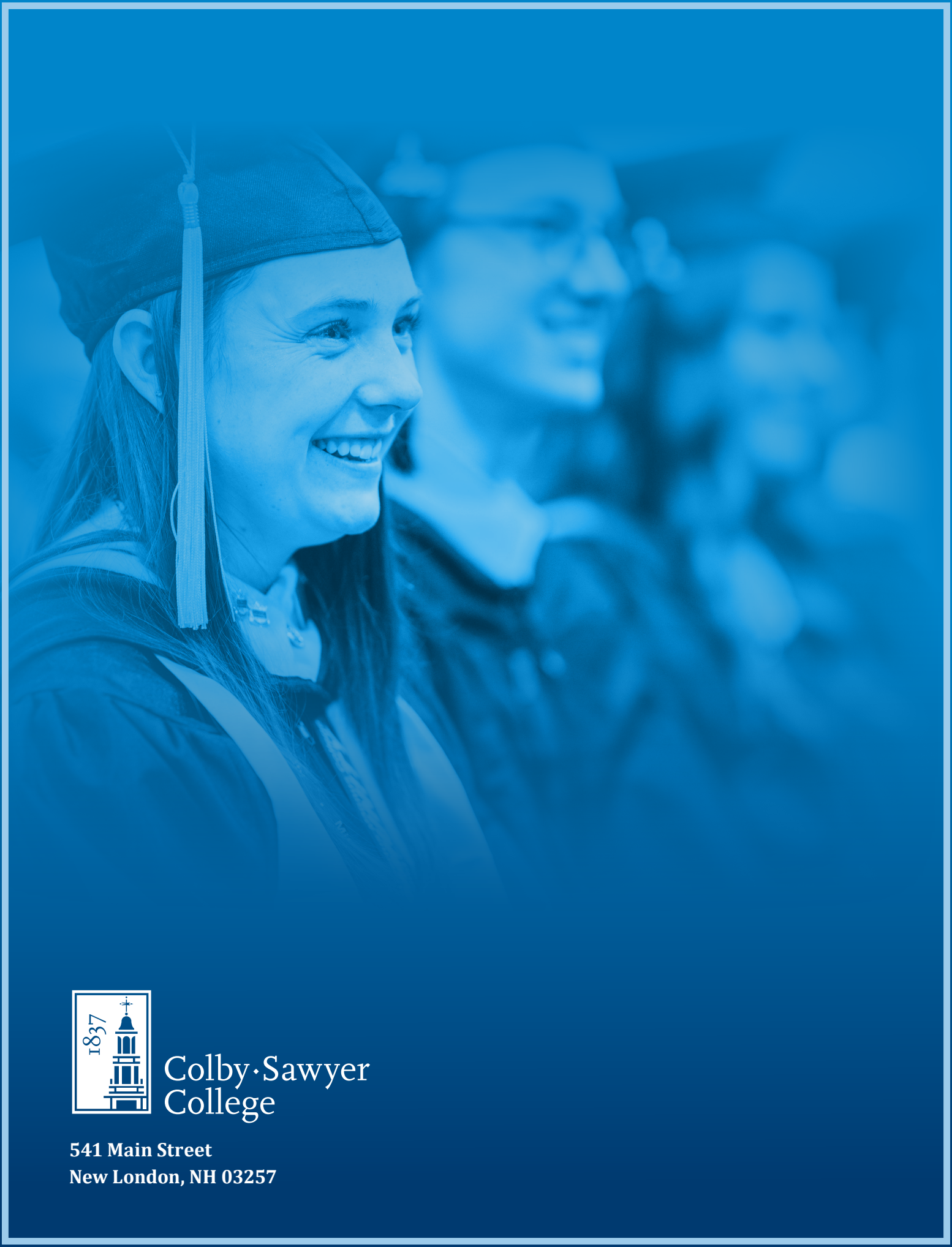
- Identify the academic programs that support the strongest bond between students and the college.
- Diversify the donor base and expand corporate and foundation support.
- Provide support to faculty and staff to seek direct grant funding.

Strategy 4

Optimize our existing institutional resources, physical plant, and infrastructure.

Approach

- Develop and implement a sustainable Facilities and IT infrastructure plan to address deferred maintenance and improvement
- Assess our existing physical space for maintenance and optimal use.
- Explore creative partnership and co-ownership opportunities that strengthen Colby-Sawyer's capacity, reach, and long-term sustainability.



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