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**HOUGHTON**  
**UNIVERSITY**



Published November 2025

# **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

## **2024-2025**

*Pursuing Christ-Centered Excellence*



Dear Friends,

We are pleased to provide this second annual President’s Report, as an update on the University’s progress in achieving current institutional goals. Developed by a wide-ranging group of stakeholders in 2023-2024 and adopted by the Board of Trustees in April 2024, Houghton’s current strategic priorities guide the strategic direction of the University through 2028. These priorities guide resource allocation, academic planning, co-curricular, athletics, advancement, and governance decision-making.

The 2024-2025 academic year was an exciting one for Houghton. As you will find in the report that follows, the University continues to make significant strides. We

are growing the university’s undergraduate and graduate enrollment and growing the resources necessary for addressing pressing capital needs. We are strengthening the co-curricular experience for residential undergraduate students, and subsequently, increasing the engagement of undergraduate students in those activities. We are strengthening the competitiveness of Highlander Athletics, both within the Empire 8 Athletic Conference (NCAA, Division III) and the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA). Also, we have developed and will launch in the current academic year, two new graduate programs, to be delivered completely online, both of which are aligned with regional demand.

Most notably over the last year, Houghton’s institutional accreditation was reaffirmed by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). This reaffirmation means Houghton has met or exceeded accreditation standards in areas including mission and goals, ethics and integrity, the student learning experience, effectiveness assessment, continuous improvement, and governance and administration. Houghton has now been continuously accredited by Middle States for the last 90 years, symbolizing a longstanding commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.

Houghton remains committed to providing a Christ-centered, academically challenging education for students. We are one of very few options for students who want a higher education experience in the Northeast that intentionally integrates Christian faith with academic excellence. It is a privilege to continue providing such an option, and it is a joy for us to serve those students and their families. Together, we will continue to strive for new levels of excellence, for the benefit of our students and for the glory of our God.

**Wayne D. Lewis Jr.**  
President

## About the Strategic Plan

Houghton University is a Christ-centered community committed to service, excellence, the Gospel, and Christian discipleship. Our strategic plan continues to provide direction for growth and development while ensuring our mission and values—biblical authority, Christ-centered excellence, loving relationships, and selfless service—remain at the core of all we do.

The plan focuses on seven priorities: strengthening **Christian Community**, advancing **Academics**, **Capital Investment** in facilities, driving **Digital Transformation**, growing **Enrollment**, supporting **Personnel**, and enriching the **Student Experience**. Together, these priorities equip Houghton to meet the needs of today’s students and prepare for future generations with excellence and faithfulness.

## Christian Community †

### Strategic Priority 1: Offer an intentionally Christ-centered, highly relational learning environment that provides opportunities for ongoing Christian formation

Houghton University is deeply committed to fostering a Christ-centered community that nurtures spiritual growth and discipleship among students, faculty, and staff.

This priority is reflected in the creation of the Office of Discipleship and Christian Formation in 2023, which serves as a hub for spiritual development across campus.

In 2024, the university conducted a national search for a new Dean of Spiritual Life, culminating in the appointment of Scott Hallman in August 2025. With over 30 years of pastoral experience, Hallman brings a wealth of knowledge and a passion for guiding young adults in their spiritual journeys.



Scott Hallman

Small group gatherings have become a vital part of campus life, fostering connections and spiritual growth among students, faculty, and staff. These gatherings take place in residence halls, athletic teams, and other student groups, with participation reaching 50%. Annual campus surveys have shown measurable growth in faith formation, demonstrating the impact of these initiatives.

Houghton also prioritizes the integration of faith into professional development for faculty and staff. The Staff Colloquium has been a key platform for promoting this integration, with sessions like Dr. J.L. Miller’s “Life-Giving Work: How to Connect Personal, Spiritual, Health, and Daily Life to Avoid Burnout and Experience Thriving” serving as a highlight of the program.

### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

2023: Office of Discipleship and Christian Formation officially opened.

2024: National search conducted for new Dean of Spiritual Life.

August 2025: Scott Hallman hired as Dean of Spiritual Life, bringing 30+ years of pastoral experience and a passion for spiritual formation in young adults.

**Small Group Gatherings:** Held within residence halls, athletic teams, and across the general student body, with 50% participation among students, faculty, and staff.

**Faith Formation Growth:** Demonstrated measurable growth in faith formation through annual campus surveys.



## Academics

### Strategic Priority 2: Offer a Christ-centered education in the liberal arts and sciences that is distinctive for its cultivation of scholar-servants equipped to lead and serve in a rapidly changing world

Houghton University is committed to providing a transformative academic experience that integrates faith and scholarship. By combining rigorous academics with spiritual formation, the University prepares students to excel in their careers and make meaningful contributions to society.

The University has made significant progress in expanding applied learning opportunities across all majors. By Fall 2024, 30% of majors included applied learning components, and by Fall 2025, this increased to 50%. Currently, 98% of majors offer applied learning with integrated faith components, surpassing the target of 100% by Fall 2028.

In Spring 2024, Houghton launched a campus-wide initiative to integrate faith and scholarship. This initiative is led by three faculty fellows—Dr. Mark Borchert, Dr. Eli Knapp, and Dr. Rebekah Yates—who are driving efforts to combine academic rigor with small-group discipleship and spiritual growth.



Dr. Mark Borchert



Dr. Eli Knapp



Dr. Rebekah Yates

Graduate program expansion is another key focus. The Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in Adolescence Education was approved and launched in Fall 2025, and a proposal for a Master of Music Education program was submitted to the New York State Education Department. These programs are designed to integrate faith, leadership, and service, ensuring that graduates are equipped to thrive academically and spiritually.

#### KPIs:

##### Applied Learning Opportunities:

Fall 2024: 30% of majors offered applied learning opportunities.

Fall 2025: 50% of majors offered applied learning opportunities.

Current: 98% of majors offer applied learning with integrated faith components, ahead of the target of 100% by Fall 2028.

##### Faith and Scholarship Initiative:

Spring 2024: Campus-wide initiative launched to integrate faith and scholarship.

Fall 2024–25: Three faculty fellows appointed to lead the initiative.

**Goal:** Develop and adopt three new graduate programs by Fall 2028.

Through these efforts, Houghton University continues to strengthen its academic offerings, ensuring students receive a Christ-centered education that prepares them to lead and serve with excellence in their chosen fields. Three faculty fellows appointed Fall 2024–25.



Dr. Michelle Vanasse

##### New Leadership

Houghton University has strengthened its academic leadership with the appointment of Dr. Michelle Vanasse as the inaugural Dean of Education and Behavioral Sciences. Her leadership is expected to enhance the strategic direction and development of these academic programs, further supporting the university's commitment to Christ-centered excellence and scholar-servant formation.

## Capital Investment

### Strategic Priority 3: Modernize the residential campus through strategic capital investment to enhance the living and learning experience with specific focus on student residence renewal

Houghton University is dedicated to creating a vibrant and modern residential campus that supports students' living and learning experiences. The University has made significant strides in securing funding for student residence renewal and other capital projects.

By the end of FY25, Houghton exceeded its goal of raising \$5,000,000 for student residence renewal, achieving a cumulative total of \$11,913,385—surpassing the target of \$10,611,702. These funds will be used to enhance the quality, safety, and functionality of student residences, ensuring a supportive and engaging environment for students.

In addition to residence renewal, the university has raised \$139,118 for non-residence capital projects in FY25, bringing the total to \$267,549 over the past two years. While the goal is \$400,000 annually and \$2 million total, these contributions represent steady progress toward improving campus facilities.

#### KPIs:

##### Student Residence Renewal:

FY25 Goal: \$5,000,000.

FY25 Actual: \$11,913,385 (cumulative), exceeding the goal.

Cumulative FY25 Target: \$10,611,702.

Overall Goal: Secure \$15,000,000 by FY28.

##### Non-Residence Renewal Capital Projects:

FY25 Goal: \$400,000/year (\$2M total).

FY25 Actual: \$139,118 raised in FY25; \$267,549 raised over two years.

##### Advancement Highlights (non-KPI):

New Gifts & Commitments: \$49.04M raised since June 2020, including \$26.4M over the past two fiscal years—a record level.

Endowment Growth: Surpassed \$91.4M, up from \$80.5M, including a \$3M anonymous gift to create the Ellen F. Donley Dean of Education and Behavioral Science endowed chair.

One Day Giving Challenge 2025: Raised a record \$2.25M+ from 2,177 donors.

Highlander Club Growth: Athletics collaboration led to 669 supporters, exceeding the target of 275.

Major Donor Societies:

1883 Society membership: 581 members.

James S. Luckey Society: 31 new legacy/planned gift members.





**Coming Soon!**  
**EAST HALL**  
**For Christ and Christ Alone**



## Digital Transformation

### Strategic Priority 4: Optimize and modernize the digital infrastructure of the university

Houghton University is focused on strengthening its IT systems, data governance, and security protocols to support its strategic goals.

#### KPIs:

##### Third-Party IT Partnership:

Goal: Establish a partnership with a third-party provider for IT oversight, support, and backup by FY24.

##### Progress:

Engaged potential partners and conducted a comprehensive needs assessment.

Established a strong foundation for partnership in FY26, with key vendors and partnership models identified for the next phase.

##### Data Governance Policies:

Goal: Implement clear data governance policies and procedures to improve security and operational efficiency by FY25.

##### Progress:

Reviewed ERP systems and IT infrastructure.

Partnered with organizations to develop policies.

Created a framework and roadmap, with initial actions underway to achieve measurable improvements by FY26.

These efforts reflect Houghton University's continued commitment to leveraging technology to support its mission and enhance the overall student and staff experience.

## Enrollment

### Strategic Priority 5: Substantially grow the enrollment of the University, including undergraduate programs, graduate programs and programs for high school students

#### Objective

Substantially grow the university's enrollment across undergraduate, graduate, and high school programs while maintaining a diverse and financially balanced student body. Houghton University is focused on expanding access and opportunities for students through strategic partnerships, financial aid, and athletic offerings.

#### KPIs:

Pell-Eligible Incoming Students

**Goal:** Maintain 35%–40% of incoming students as Pell-eligible.

##### Progress:

FY24 Goal: 35%–40%; achieved 36%.

FY25 Goal: 35%–40%; achieved 42%.

#### Partnerships with Christian High Schools:

**Goal:** Increase partnerships with Christian high schools.

##### Progress:

FY24 Baseline: 30 schools.

FY25 Goal: Add 5 schools; added 11 schools, reaching 41 partnerships and exceeding the goal.

#### Gifts for Student Financial Aid:

**Goal:** Secure \$15,000,000 in gifts for scholarships (immediate-use and endowed).

##### Progress:

FY24 Goal: \$3,000,000; achieved \$3,112,201.

FY25 Goal: \$6,000,000; achieved \$7,687,564, exceeding the goal.

**Cumulative FY25 Total:** \$4,575,363.

#### Athletic Offerings for Student Athletes:

**Goal:** Assess and implement growth in athletic programs.

##### Progress:

FY23: Task force formed.

FY24: Task force completed; report made.

FY25: No new sports added; new coach hired.

FY26 Projection: Roster expected to grow to 36 athletes, a net gain of 12 student-athletes.

## Personnel

### Strategic Priority 6: Attract, invest in and retain mission-aligned Christian employees appropriate for meeting the spiritual, academic and community needs and aspirations of the University

Houghton University is committed to strengthening its recruitment, compensation, and professional development strategies to ensure a high-quality workforce aligned with its mission.

#### KPIs:

##### Reducing Faculty and Salaried Employee Salary Gap:

Goal: Gradually reduce the gap between Houghton's average salary and the CCCU midpoint.

Progress: A 2% salary increase was implemented for employees following a board-approved amendment to the 2023–24 budget.

Strategic adjustments were made to IT staff salaries. Employee bonuses were provided at Christmas 2024 (2024-2025 academic year).

##### Benchmarking Data for Hourly Staff:

Goal: Identify appropriate benchmarking data for hourly (non-faculty) employees by FY25.

Progress: A contract was established with Payscale to access comparative salary data for non-faculty employees.

These initiatives aim to ensure competitive compensation and professional growth opportunities, fostering a supportive and mission-driven work environment.



## Student Experience

**Strategic Priority 7: Cultivate a learning environment where diverse learners can thrive spiritually, mentally, academically and physically and engage deeply in their passions and vocation.**

### Student Experience Objective:

Cultivate a learning environment where diverse learners thrive spiritually, mentally, academically, and physically, while engaging deeply in their passions and vocations. Houghton University is committed to enhancing student engagement, promoting wellness, strengthening co-curricular learning, and maintaining athletic excellence.

### KPIs:

#### Enhance Student Engagement Across Campus Life:

**Goal:** Increase student participation in campus groups, events, and programs.

#### Progress:

Fall 2023: 60% participation.  
Fall 2024: 65% participation.  
Fall 2025: 70% participation.

Engagement tracked via app and Campus Groups platform.

#### Promote Student Wellness:

**Goal:** Support mental and physical well-being through wellness activities.

#### Progress:

Fall 2023: Wellness program implemented.  
Fall 2024: 50% participation.  
Fall 2025: 60% participation.

Activities include Wellness Wednesdays, book groups, consultations, psychoeducational groups, and an annual De-Stress Fair.

### Strengthen Co-Curricular Learning:

**Goal:** Document and celebrate students' out-of-classroom achievements through co-curricular transcripts.

#### Progress:

Fall 2023: Transcript developed.  
Fall 2024: Transcript implemented.  
Fall 2025: 85% of students completed transcripts.

### Maintain Athletic Excellence:

**Goal:** Ensure athletics programs perform in the top half of the E8 Commissioners Cup standings.

#### Progress:

FY24: Finished 4th out of 9.  
FY25: Maintained top-half position despite new SUNY schools joining.

### Increase Post-Season Athletic Participation:

**Goal:** Expand the number of athletic programs competing in post-season play.

#### Progress:

FY24: 12/17 programs (70.6%).  
FY25: 13/17 programs (76.5%).

### Wellness Initiative Highlights:

**Goal:** Expand the number of athletic programs competing in post-season play.

#### Progress:

FY24: 12/17 programs (70.6%).  
FY25: 13/17 programs (76.5%).

## Thriving Through Athletics

**Athletics advances the University's Student Experience strategic priorities by cultivating a Christ-centered environment where student-athletes pursue excellence for the glory of God while thriving spiritually, mentally, academically, and physically.**

### Track & Field Program Growth

The addition of a full-time Track & Field coach has yielded immediate results, significantly improving overall team performance and competitiveness.

### Men's Basketball Progress

The Men's Basketball program has shown consistent improvement each year under the current leadership of Coach Jeremy Bialek. This season marked a major milestone, achieving the highest number of total wins since 1994.

### Baseball Program Record

The Baseball team had a historic year, recording the most wins in program history. This success is strongly linked to a large, strategically recruited incoming class and the effective efforts of the coaching staff, including graduate assistants.

### E8 Commissioner's Cup Standing

Houghton finished 6th out of 12 in the Empire 8 Commissioner's Cup standings. With the addition of three new member institutions, maintaining a top-half position is an increasingly competitive accomplishment with strong performances in Track & Field, Men's Basketball, and Baseball playing a significant role in this year's success.





## **University Leadership**

### **President's Executive Leadership Cabinet**

**Wayne D. Lewis Jr., *President***

**Greg Bish, *Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness***

**Bill Burrichter, *Vice President for Student Life***

**Jill Jordan, *Interim Provost and Dean of the Faculty***

**Natasha Davis, *Special Assistant to the President for Strategic Planning and Compliance; Title IX and Title VI Coordinator***

**Karl Sisson, *Vice President for Advancement and External Engagement***

**Jason Towers, *Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing***

**Matthew Webb, *Director of Athletics***

**Dale Wright, *Vice President for Finance, Chief Fiscal Officer***