Student Life Strategic Plan

2026–2028

The Ohio State University
Office of Student Life

From the Desk of Dr. Melissa Shivers

I am delighted to share the refreshed Student Life strategic plan. The prior strategic plan achieved strong gains in learning and well-being initiatives, including expanded participation in career preparation and leadership programming, increased involvement in the Student Employment Experience and significantly scaled hazing prevention efforts. Key operational improvements were also advanced, including the continued implementation of human resources guidelines, upgrades to BuckID technology and substantial growth in fundraising.

It is an exciting time at Ohio State as we continue to invest in our future, focusing on critical areas like Academic Excellence and investing in new areas like artificial intelligence. To ensure Student Life is at the forefront of supporting our students as they engage, learn and thrive at the university, Student Life has refreshed our strategic plan, which steers and prioritizes our work within the divisional strategy framework. Developed through a collaborative process informed by staff, students, parents and families, community partners and campus stakeholders, this updated plan reaffirms our focus on the student experience, now sharpened to align with the university's long-term aspirations. Our renewed plan centers on four strategic goals: Engage, Learn, Thrive and Operational Excellence. Each goal reflects our commitment to the whole student, support for our staff and forward-thinking approaches to facilities and operational planning.

As the university advances major priorities, including expanded affordability pathways and new models of student opportunity, Student Life will remain responsive, focused and strategically aligned. Most importantly, the essence of our work remains unchanged. Student Life exists to cultivate environments in which Buckeyes can discover their strengths, form lasting communities and pursue their academic and personal goals with confidence.

I look forward to continuing this work with you as we help shape the next chapter of the iconic Ohio State experience.

Melissa S. Shivers, PhD
Senior Vice President for Student Life

Overview of Student Life

The Ohio State University's rich legacy was born in a single building that served multiple purposes: classroom, laboratory, living space. Over the years, these complementary uses have emerged as hallmarks of the iconic Ohio State education that generations of Buckeyes have come to strive for and expect.

In support of Ohio State's motto, "Education for Citizenship," Student Life is focused on creating unmistakably unique, supportive and productive environments in which students can expand their aspirations and achieve their full potential, prepare for a life of success and make a difference in the lives of others.

In a place so big in possibility, we work to connect the countless points where the university intersects with students' lives, bringing the experience full-circle from the classroom to professional development, living spaces and co-curricular commitments.

At The Ohio State University, we have an unparalelled commitment to the comprehensive student experience, and that fuels our collaborative efforts to provide the resources and support that students and staff need to engage, learn and thrive.

Our Team

The Office of Student Life employs more than 5,000 team members, including:

- **4,600+ part-time student employees**
- **520+ administrative and professional staff**
- **300+ bargaining unit staff** (housekeeping, food service, maintenance)
- **150+ civil service staff**
- **60+ graduate assistants**

Our Facilities

Our footprint across Ohio State's campuses covers six million square feet and includes:

- **36 residence halls and five houses** on the Columbus Campus, three graduate residence halls, and three housing complexes on the Wooster, Newark and Mansfield campuses.
- More than **35 food service locations** on Columbus, Newark, Mansfield and Wooster campuses
- **13 health, wellness and student success facilities** on the Columbus campus including the Adventure Recreation Center, Jesse Owens Recreation Centers on North and South Campus, the North Recreation Center, the Recreation and Physical Activity Center (RPAC), the RPAC Aquatic Center, Buckeye Bike Hub, Coffey Road Park, Esports Arena, Lincoln Tower Park, Outdoor Adventure Center, the Wilce Student Health Center and the Younkin Success Center
- **36 acres** of outdoor recreation space on and around the Columbus campus
- One of the area's most comprehensive event centers, **the Ohio Union**

Student Life Foundations

VISION

To be the premier student affairs division in the country; student- and staff-centered with cross-cutting experiential learning and a dedication to facilitating an environment that is supportive and welcoming.

MISSION

The Office of Student Life fosters students' development, learning, well-being and sense of belonging; empowers students to achieve their academic, personal and professional goals; and prepares students to be engaged in a global society.

CULTURE COMMITMENTS

Appreciation, Connection, Support, Care

TAGLINE

Engage. Learn. Thrive.

STUDENT LIFE LEARNING GOALS

- Embrace self-discovery
- Cultivate community
- Foster health and well-being
- Think critically

Office of Student Life 2026–2028 Strategic Plan

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objective	Strategies and Metrics (by 6/30/28)
Engage: Strengthen opportunities for engagement and community that foster a connected and welcoming environment for every Buckeye.	Intentionally create opportunities for students transitioning to Ohio State's Columbus campus to find community, especially Buckeye Bridge, transfer and campus change students	Generate and fully implement recommendations from **Student Transition Tiger Team**
	Develop Buckeye Commons programs and services that are continually responsive to student needs and help build student community and engagement	Scale Buckeye Commons' reach to **10,000+ student interactions**
	Enhance staff engagement with professional development opportunities and departmental decision-making processes	At least **5 change initiatives** involve staff at multiple levels
Learn: Strengthen academic partnerships and support students' transition into the workforce through investing in experiential opportunities and career skill development and navigation.	Expand just-in-time career navigation and development for all students, including by launching Career Studios	Conduct **3,200 cumulative career coaching appointments** in three strategic campus locations
	Expand opportunities for meaningful on-campus internships that prepare students for their careers	Explore launching a **paid internship program** in Student Life, with recommendations completed by autum 2026
	Invest in staff and students' education and opportunities to utilize AI in thoughtful and effective ways	Develop at least **3 educational efforts** for students and staff on intersection of lifelong AI use and digital wellness

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objective	Strategies and Metrics (by 6/30/28)
Thrive: Promote academic excellence and a supportive campus environment through investments in holistic well-being and essential needs.	Advance Ohio State's culture of care by prioritizing proactive and preventative approaches to mental health and well-being	**5% total increase** in number of students served through preventative mental health services
	Determine and invest in the future of Student Life facilities, including housing, dining and recreation, for undergraduate, graduate and professional students, ensuring they can consistently engage, learn and thrive across the entire Student Life portfolio	Advance a Student Life facilities master plan that contributes to student success efforts, addresses deferred maintenance in campus housing and modernizes residential experience facilities. Phase 1 will focus on the **North Towers projects**, to be completed by **Autumn 2028**
	Champion supporting students' essential needs and increase utilization of the Monda Student Resource Center and associated resources	**5% total increase** in student visits to the Monda Student Resource Center
	Continue investing in Student Life Culture Commitments through departmental Culture Commitment Action Plans (CCAP) to contribute to Student Life being a workplace of choice	**80% completion** of CCAP initiatives
Operational Excellence: Ensure organizational sustainability and efficiency through innovative practices and resource stewardship.	Continue to explore avenues to advance competitive and equitable compensation for Student Life staff	Engage in at least **3 Student Life leadership conversations** with campus partners (e.g., Human Resources, Business and Finance) and develop associated action steps
	Further modernize Student Life's web and marketing presence so it is fully aligned with evolving digital accessibility requirements, while proactively preparing for the emerging impacts of AI on accessibility standards, user experience and content strategy	Ensure **all Student Life webpages** meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2.1, Level AA standards and leverage accessible, structured content practices that enhance visibility within AI driven search ecosystems, supported by an initiative focused on modernizing content management
	Advance Student Life fundraising framework to raise funds to support students	Raise **$4.5 million per fiscal year** to fund Student Life priorities
	Continue to enhance responsible fiscal stewardship, effectiveness and efficiency of Student Life service delivery framework and processes	**Monitor and set annual targets** for both operating expense reductions and revenue generation, while maintaining high levels of student and client satisfaction