



EXTRAORDINARY LIVES: BRENAU 2025

BRENAU UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN

BRENAU UNIVERSITY'S MISSION

Brenau University challenges students to live extraordinary lives of personal and professional fulfillment. As students pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees or non-degree programs at Brenau campuses and online, each prepares for a lifetime of intellectual accomplishment and appreciation of artistic expression through a curriculum enriched by the liberal arts, scientific inquiry and global awareness.

FULFILLING THE MISSION WITH VISION

Brenau University will provide a rich and much-needed approach to 21st century education. The **BRENAU 2025** vision foresees the university's producing intellectually adept, compassionate, professionally expert leaders steeped in the liberal arts to address commercial and social needs of a diverse world.

BRENAU 2025 vision is clear: *By 2025, Brenau University will be an internationally recognized leader in innovative higher education with a unique blend of the liberal arts and professional preparation resulting in accelerated and advanced degrees in areas that meet the essential needs of the 21st century.*

BRENAU 2025 CONTEXT

Worldwide knowledge doubles every five years, translating into the need to provide some form of education enhancement to three-quarters of the American work force every five years. For society to benefit from this wellspring of knowledge, educated and adept people must translate "knowledge" into useable protocols and social wisdom. In the past an individual might change jobs or careers one or two times in their employment lives. Because of myriad social and economic factors in today's world, individuals now change jobs and even career paths, as many as 10 times before they retire.

Brenau's strategy takes all this into consideration, but it does not stop there. The university recognizes that learning at its best and most valuable goes far beyond the simple accumulation of raw, cold facts and professional skills. Such a limited focus often results in an educational experience that lacks appreciation of personal accountability for the social good, artistic expression and the living of an ethical life.

It is urgent that America's academic institutions construct an educational process that includes the best of a classical liberal arts and professional or career preparedness. Through its BRENAU 2025 vision, the university addresses these critical elements for personal and professional fulfillment through an innovative curriculum that uniquely blends a rich and creative liberal arts core with extraordinary programs for professional preparedness. Integral in such a program is the mastery of digital communications and data utilization. This innovative curriculum infuses all programs at undergraduate and graduate levels; this makes implementing the BRENAU 2025 vision all the more challenging because of demands by students and prospective employers for people to complete better educations in less time than that required in older models.

Creating and maintaining such a comprehensive curriculum is not easy. It demands extraordinary commitment by faculty, staff and students. Brenau believes that the outcomes in changed lives and, ultimately, a changed world justify the investment of the extensive financial and intellectual capital. Through accelerated degree programs and enhanced learning, Brenau plans to expose all of its students to its pioneering new curriculum that not only will educate them for a profession but also will prepare them for citizenship in a complex global society.

BRENAU 2025: SEEDING EXTRAORDINARY LIVES

The central idea in Brenau University's mission, preparing all of its students to live extraordinary lives, purposefully uses the word "extraordinary" to reflect an institutional conviction that Brenau graduates will have an education that is not just excellent but demonstrably life-changing – both for them and for others. The select group of creative, leading and inspiring citizens of the 21st century that the university serves will require much more than a 20th-century educational formula. They require inventive, strategic, knowledge-based programs that lead to both undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The educational path for most undergraduate students typically leads to their declaring one field of study for a narrow range of employment opportunities. This neither prepares them to keep up with the rate of worldwide knowledge nor enables them to be nimble enough to change jobs or careers whenever that becomes necessary or desirable.

BRENAU 2025 will create a unique institution in the world of American higher education – one that others will want to imitate. It is an ambitious goal, but it is achievable.

ACHIEVING THE VISION: BRENAU 2025

Strategy 1: *Create and apply a unique, transformative curriculum that blends liberal arts and professional preparation at all levels.*

The Undergraduate and Graduate schools of Brenau University will both design and develop curricula that prepare all Brenau students to tackle complex ideas and information. Courses will blend content required for their major and professional study with content from the liberal arts. Through both the nature of its content and the way this content is taught, this innovative “Four Portals of Learning” curriculum will transform the way that Brenau students learn about their majors and professions. Nearly every course students take will mix the required content for their discipline with one to four of the following liberal arts ingredients:

- World understanding
- Scientific and analytic curiosity
- Artistic and creative imagination
- Communication and language fluency

Tactic 1.1 – *Develop Four Portals of Learning models that demonstrate to the faculty what “Four Portals” learning is.*

Two examples of this are the following interdisciplinary courses that are taught by faculty in the College of Fine Arts and Humanities and the College of Health and Science:

- **Green Space: Development, Need and Impact:** Initial discussions focus on the U.S. National Forest and National Park System and their economic, political and social impact on the U.S.; the course then analyzes the economic, political, and social influences the USNF and NPS have had on the development of green space globally including biodiversity, ecosystem processes and natural resource conservation.
- **Spirituality and Society:** The course offers multidisciplinary perspectives on spirituality. Student outcomes include learning to: differentiate between spirituality and religion; understand the relationship between culture/ethnicity and spirituality; explore influences of gender on spirituality; explore multiple types and practices of spirituality; explore the relationship between ethics, logic and spirituality; explore spirituality in math and science; and understand the relationship between spirituality and health.

Tactic 1.2 – *Begin systematic upgrade of academic and residential facilities to support the Four Portals of Learning concept. This will require raising funds to*

rehabilitate the historic buildings and construct new academic and student life facilities.

Tactic 1.3 – Implement the Discovery Incubator and Brenau Council of Scholars.

The Four Portals of Learning concept provides a constant laboratory for Brenau faculty members who learn how to turn students into actively engaged scholars. Faculty members also personally discover things that inform their own scholarship and research in their disciplines.

Brenau's Discovery Incubator will facilitate this learning and discovery process as well as advance the Four Portals curriculum, collaborative research and a culture of interdisciplinary inquiry across the university, including graduate programs.

Under the auspices of the Discovery Incubator, the university is forming the Brenau Council of Scholars, a group of ten "all-star" academic and pedagogical leaders appointed by the president. This circle of academic role models will inspire all Brenau faculty members to elevate their personal and institutional aspirations. Since scholars will hold endowed professorships for defined periods of time, others will have opportunities to move into those positions as warranted.

Each scholar is responsible for the design and development of a program of original research and investigation within the Discovery Incubator. All of the faculty are eligible to apply for vacant positions in the Council of Scholars and will be evaluated based on their qualifications and leadership potential. An endowed fund, which includes start-up dollars and endowed scholarships, will support the program clusters. Each cluster comprises an endowed professor as the team leader, additional faculty scholars and researchers, and student assistants. Through its ground-breaking work, the Discovery Incubator and Council of Scholars will elevate Brenau's learning, research and scholarly endeavors to national recognition and leadership.

Strategy 2: Establish accelerated and expanded undergraduate and graduate programs.

Using Four Portals of Learning, the educational pathways to various degrees for qualified students will be reduced in their duration by at least one year – in some cases more than one year. For example, qualified students in the Academy will be able not only to complete their high school degrees in four years but also earn an associate's degree, which is the first two years of college. Undergraduate students will be able to enroll in three-year degree programs for their baccalaureate and four-year programs for their baccalaureate and master's degrees. Some doctoral courses may similarly be accelerated depending on the qualifications of the student.

Tactic 2.1 – *Expect and prepare all students to undertake graduate study; establish an accelerated pathway to associates degree for Academy students, to accelerated baccalaureate degrees for undergraduate students, to accelerated baccalaureate/masters degrees, and to doctoral degrees.*

Tactic 2.2 – *Under the supervision of a Graduate Council, develop market-driven doctorates that meet societal needs in areas of existing institutional strengths and explore new, leading-edge graduate programs.*

Comprising the Brenau Council of Scholars, the Council of Academic Deans, enrollment and marketing staff, and *ad hoc* outside professionals, the council will identify graduate programs that have industry-leading potential. Regular assessment will ensure that graduate programs remain market-driven and up to date. In the event that a program falls out of demand, that program will be discontinued.

Strategy 3: *Develop extraordinary experiences, programs, facilities and technology to drive enrollment growth beyond 5,000 students by 2025.*

Brenau recognizes the changing demographics of its service areas and will seek to enhance the ability to attract and support students from diverse social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. This commitment extends to increasing financial aid opportunities for students at all levels.

The majority of Brenau growth before 2025 will occur in career-driven graduate programs, including doctoral programs in selected disciplines – the health professions, biological sciences, fine arts and performing arts, teacher education, specialty business programs, and others.

More than 800 – about a third of Brenau’s total student population – are currently graduate students pursuing masters and education specialist degrees in seven graduate programs. Most of the growth to 5,000 students will occur primarily through expanding career- and market-driven graduate programs in health sciences, fine arts and performing arts, education and business. Many graduate students will be nontraditional students, i.e. older and working students.

Tactic 3.1 – *Use the Council of Scholars to inspire innovative programs and pedagogical models leading to vibrant and growing study and research. Develop funding for graduate fellowships in these programs through philanthropy and competitive external institutional grants and awards.*

Tactic 3.2 – *Equip the entire university with state-of-the-art information technology, physical facilities, and distance learning/teaching expertise and with this enhanced capability, aggressively market the undergraduate and graduate programs on an international scale.*

Tactic 3.3– *Expand financial aid resources for a diverse student population to include first-generation university students as well as those of African-American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino and other cultural heritages.*

Strategy 4: *Make international studies and experiences accessible for all students.*

Brenau will become a catalyst for educational and social transformation both through respect for the peoples of the world and through familiarity with global cultures. The university will provide opportunities and support to all Brenau students for international study.

Tactic 4.1– *Develop international programs and experiences for Brenau’s diverse student body and mix into current and future discipline-based courses the “global citizenship and awareness” as part of the Four Portals of Learning experience.*

The university will develop academic partnerships in Europe, Yucatan of Mexico, China and other countries. All Brenau students – regardless of their lifestyles and availabilities – will be able to have academic programs in other countries. Brenau students will develop as part of their campus-based and subject-based coursework an understanding of the lifestyles, conditions, traditions and knowledge base of other cultures. For example, nursing students will learn how people from different cultures react to physical examinations.

Tactic 4.2 – *Require facility in a second language for all Brenau undergraduates.*

Although required foreign language study as part of the core curriculum has been eliminated for undergraduate students in many colleges and universities across the nation, Brenau will buck that trend by making second language study an integral part of its Four Portals of Learning curriculum.

Tactic 4.3 – *Provide a means of funding an international study experience for every undergraduate student and, when financially feasible, for every Brenau student.*

Brenau Women’s College will create for each undergraduate an international study experience by her junior or senior year, or during a regular semester of student exchange with a partner international institution. This program will be enlarged to include the entire Brenau student population as practical.

Tactic 4.4 – *Include international study as a priority in Brenau’s fund-raising campaign.*

Leading trustees have already demonstrated their commitment to international study, but more donors will need to be identified and cultivated as part of the university’s fund-raising effort.

BRENAU UNIVERSITY'S OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The following operating principles will guide the university's decision-making process as its faculty and administration work toward achieving Brenau 2025:

1. Strategic goals and plans steer the university toward regional and national academic leadership.
2. The university mission informs and directs academic programs that are intellectually and artistically stimulating for all students.
3. The university environment is student-centered and supportive of individual achievement.
4. Brenau education inspires community responsibility and service to others while encouraging integrity and respect of individual worth and equity.
5. The university provides a progressive curriculum that conforms to or exceeds the best national standards.
6. Brenau's culture is intolerant of mediocrity in effort.
7. Brenau attracts and retains an exemplary faculty and staff committed to the intellectual, creative and ethical growth of its students.
8. As a nonsectarian institution, Brenau respects individual spiritual choice, including the Judeo-Christian heritage of the university's founders, and encourages understanding of diverse global traditions and beliefs.
9. The university promotes sustainability and operates in a fiscally responsible manner.
10. The university offers services and facilities to the external community for cultural, civic and intellectual enrichment without compromising its principles.