

Bloomfield College Keeps Mission at the Core

Bloomfield College, founded as the German Theological School in 1868, has been dedicated to serving the diverse populations in New Jersey for more than 150 years. Given Bloomfield's rich history of educating underserved students and amid growing financial challenges, Bloomfield sought external support, engaging with Huron as part of the consultancy's social alliance program. Together, Bloomfield and Huron are working to pave a path forward and sustain Bloomfield's unique position of being one of the most [diverse colleges](#) in the country.

Challenge

With a ranking as one of the most [diverse liberal arts colleges in the nation](#), Bloomfield is the only higher education institution in New Jersey to be recognized as a predominantly Black institution (PBI) and Hispanic-serving institution (HSI), as well as being designated a minority-serving institution (MSI). More than half of Bloomfield's students are the first in their families to enroll in college.

“Since the time it was a seminary, Bloomfield has been profoundly committed to the underserved populations in the northern part of New Jersey. It aims to be an affordable social mobility institution, dedicated to first generation, full-time students. Students and families can see representation in terms of the other students, faculty and staff.”

KEVIN CAVANAGH, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT AT BLOOMFIELD COLLEGE

Facing numerous challenges, however, Bloomfield leaders realized they needed to engage outside support for the exploration of potential pathways forward. They recognized the need to collaborate with an organization that could appreciate Bloomfield's mission at the core of the business model, one that could help them find solutions that kept that mission at the center. When Bloomfield engaged with Huron, its leaders appreciated Huron's thoughtful and collaborative approach to problemsolving, as well as the quantitative and qualitative methods the team used to glean insights from the college's leaders and identify potential solutions.

Approach

Part of what drew Bloomfield to Huron was the opportunity to participate in Huron's social alliance program. Started as a social entrepreneurship project, the program supports higher education institutions committed to equity and access, helping them sustain their mission and attain their goals by working together to solve strategic, structural and financial challenges. This way, these institutions can keep doing what they do best: educating and empowering students.

“Our offer is a team that is committed to the same mission that the institution holds, one that understands these issues,” said Brenna Casey, one of the managers of Huron’s social alliance. “It’s an active investment in the mission to keep it alive — we help the college so the college can help its students.”

To be considered for Huron’s social alliance program, institutions must meet three main criteria:

1. A strong and demonstrated commitment to increase access and affordability.
2. 40% or more of the student body Pell Grant eligible.
3. An operational budget below a certain threshold.

The intent is to help these institutions gain access to best practices and collaborate with other members to solve for similar struggles they face.

“Our collective responsibility is to the students,” Cavanagh said. “It’s an incredible asset to quickly get with people that have the scale of exposure to these different issues. Comparing solutions can help point you to a direction that seemed previously unavailable.”

Huron provided Bloomfield with analytical support and professional insights that a small school might not otherwise have access to. With Bloomfield’s transparent reporting of its financial challenges in 2021, the college also announced efforts to seek strategic partnerships and expanded philanthropic support. Accordingly, Bloomfield engaged Huron to help the college identify and sift through options for an optimal solution — for the school, the mission and, ultimately, the students.

“Many people in higher education fail to see the opportunities available to their institutions beyond ‘going at it alone’ or ‘closing,’” Cavanagh said. “Huron highlighted those options for us — strategies that small colleges like Bloomfield can consider and that will allow it to sustain itself.”



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