

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027



MID-CYCLE REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2025

BUILDING A

SUSTAINABLE

FUTURE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overarching goal of the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan is to ensure the long-term sustainability of RFU and its mission to prepare highly trained clinicians and researchers for the future. This goal is pursued through interprofessional collaboration and by leveraging partnerships both within and beyond the university. The Strategic Plan is organized around three categories: **Sustainability and Growth**, **Wellness and Safety**, and **Access and Equity**.

As RFU reaches the midpoint of the strategic plan, we are pleased to report meaningful progress despite ongoing challenges and uncertainties at both the federal and state levels that continue to affect higher education institutions nationwide.

SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH

- A five-year financial plan was developed, leading to an improved financial position. Through new real estate strategies, updates to Human Resources benefits, and operational improvements, RFU is expected to finalize its FY25 operating results \$10.1M ahead of last year's audited financial results. RFU has received the most extramural research funding since FY21 with over \$10.5M.
- Progress continues as planned on the construction of the new 22,000-square-foot simulation center and virtual health system. This facility will integrate innovative training methods, emerging health technologies, and artificial intelligence to strengthen patient safety. It will also prepare an interprofessional healthcare workforce to meet the demands of a rapidly changing and increasingly complex healthcare landscape.
- Philanthropy revenues grew by 59% over FY24, reflecting strong donor engagement and continued confidence in RFU's mission and impact.
- RFU successfully met and exceeded its historic \$1 Million Scholl Matching Gift Challenge months ahead of schedule, significantly increasing scholarships and resources for students preparing to heal, serve, and transform lives. The campaign created 43 new named scholarships including: 25 endowed (\$2.5M), 18 temporary restricted (\$4.8M), plus \$7M in annual and increased gifts to existing scholarships and secured eight new planned gift commitments valued at more than \$5M. Since launching in 2022, donor-funded endowed scholarships have grown by 40% and donor-funded temporary restricted scholarships by 37%.
- Private funding fully supports the Community Care Connection (CCC) mobile health program, with an additional \$1 million in state funding secured to continue delivering health services to underserved communities. The CCC partners with numerous health clinics and more than 30 community organizations across Lake County, making over 120 visits annually while also addressing food insecurity through partnerships that provide fresh produce. Serving the community for over a decade, the CCC now delivers more than 1,500 health screenings and 3,000 health services each year, helping reduce preventable ER visits and supporting local hospitals and supporting care.
- RFU, home to one of the top physician assistant (PA) programs in the U.S., launched a new degree program, the Doctor of Medicine Science (DMS), designed to expand professional opportunities for practicing PAs.
- Two additional academic programs launched including, the expansion of nurse anesthesia in Colorado and the Doctor of Medical Sciences. Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner has been submitted for accreditation review. A notice of intent for Speech-Language Pathology was submitted with an assigned accreditation application submission data of January 2028.

SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH (Continued)

- New clinical partnership sites have been established with Insight Hospital and SilverCross Hospital in Chicagoland, Palmdale Regional Medical Center in Los Angeles, and Froedtert Pleasant Prairie Hospital in Wisconsin, providing additional clinical training sites for several programs at RFU.
- For the last two academic years, RFU has matriculated its largest first-year, incoming classes since 2018. Comparing 2022 to 2023, the launch of MENP accounted for 28 of the 37 new students. In 2024, the growth came from pharmacy, nursing, CMS, PT and PA. This includes a 7% increase in the class size for Chicago Medical School to 203 students.
- This year Chicago Medical School graduated its largest class of students ever with 207 newly minted physicians.
- Chicago Medical School Class of 2025 achieved a 97% match rate, Scholl College earned its eighth consecutive 100% match rate and Clinical Psychology PhD its ninth consecutive 100% placement.
- The DeWitt C. Baldwin Institute for Interprofessional Education has launched monthly faculty development podcasts, advancing interprofessional education and promoting continuous improvement in health systems.
- A new simulation initiative has been approved by the Colleges of Pharmacy and Nursing and is currently being piloted.
- The Interprofessional Distinction program continues to expand and refine with three years of graduates from across the programs and colleges. Specialty IP Distinction programs in Precision Medicine and Palliative Care are being explored and developed.
- The Interprofessional Community Clinic launched new clinical services in ophthalmology, dermatology, pediatrics, and psychiatry with groundwork laid for interprofessional scholarship, assessment, and workload recognition.
- RFU has entered into a new lease agreement for the Woodlands Apartments in North Chicago. It allows RFU to control the housing environment while providing significant financial savings over the prior agreement.
- Continued growth of Helix 51 incubator by addition of 6,000 sf in the Innovation and Research Park Bldg - 2nd floor (total combined space of 12,500 sf) and leasing by new tenants in this space with ongoing support of BioInnovations/Biomedical Innovation Day programming aligned with RFU research strengths, including Alzheimer's/ Parkinson's, bioinformatics, and CLEAR.
- Creation of a 5 year business plan for the Clinical Immunology Lab to enhance revenue, income and productivity; planned move from the BSB Bldg to IRP first floor by early 2026.
- Improved leasing in industry space in IRP with addition of new Colorado-based biopharma company and potential leasing of two additional tenants including a diabetic-foot ulcer treatment clinic- group collaborating with Scholl College of Podiatry and a phase I/II clinical trials group.
- The RFUHC Medical Clinic at the Lake County Child Advocacy Center received approval from the Illinois Department of Public Health. With a soft launch in June, they have seen/consulted 103 patients to date.
- The RFU HC Medical Clinic has started an interprofessional collaboration with College of Nursing with faculty CRNA providing anesthesia support for in-office procedures, resulting in cost savings to the clinic.
- RFUHC is in the process of renegotiating two of the largest insurance payor contracts to increase the allowable reimbursement to the Clinics which will increase net revenue.
- RFU has launched piloting of AI tools including: ChatGPT, Gemini, and Notebook LM, alongside the Nexus-led "AI in Education Discussion Series" to explore innovative applications in learning and teaching.
- An environmental sustainability audit is underway to evaluate current practices, identify opportunities for greater efficiency, and guide long-term strategies that strengthen RFU's commitment to responsible stewardship.
- New clinical partnership sites have been established with Duly Health, Insight Hospital and SilverCross Hospital in Chicagoland, Palmdale Regional Medical Center in Los Angeles, and Froedtert Pleasant Prairie Hospital in Wisconsin, providing additional clinical training sites for several programs at RFU.
- Two new scientists have been recruited to advance research in neurodegenerative and genetic diseases.
- The academic portfolio evaluation process has moved beyond data collection and is currently in the analysis phase.

WELLNESS AND SAFETY

- RFU was named a *Best-in-Class Employer 2024* in Gallagher's U.S. Benefits Strategy and Benchmarking Survey.
- The Nexus for Faculty Success was proposed and accepted as the HLC Quality Initiative, in its plan to advance the university mission through emphasizing faculty success.
- Nexus Faculty Academy launched and focuses on building leadership skills; HR has developed an essential skills bootcamp course for managers which will launch this fall; and the Staff Council continues to host "Lunch & Learn" sessions for our staff.
- A new Wellness & Safety Committee was established and a programming inventory documented over 2,500 wellness-related events between 2022-2024 focused on occupational, physical, social and intellectual wellness dimensions.
- A workshop on *Supporting Employee Mental Health: A Manager's Guide to Recognizing and Addressing Mental Health Challenges in the Workplace* was offered in May 2025.
- A comprehensive cybersecurity plan has been implemented reducing overall risk across all categories from the National Institute for Standards and Technologies.
- AI Task Force in Academics initial work has been completed with recommendations for the institution, colleges and programs shared with the academic community.

ACCESS AND EQUITY

- RFU and DePaul University are partnering to create a direct path from undergraduate matriculation to health science degrees, including medicine (MD), physician assistant (PA) practice, physical therapy (DPT), podiatric medicine (DPM), and pharmacy (PharmD).
- New marketing strategies have been developed and implemented to enhance student recruitment for the new and existing programs through digital media, print collateral, and a dedicated website.
- New yield and communications strategies have been enacted in Strategic Enrollment Management to better tell student stories through testimonials, video and the "Voices of Practice" Speaker Series.
- A standardized approach for new program recruitment launch plans has been enacted across the Office of Admission and Enrollment, Student Financial Services, Office of the Registrar, and Marketing to support ongoing academic program growth initiatives.
- RFU launched a Social Determinants of Learning model to enhance student success by addressing academic, social, and environmental factors that impact learning. This innovative approach not only supports holistic student outcomes but also strengthens recruitment by demonstrating RFU's commitment to personalized, student-centered education and comprehensive support for diverse learners.
- The Nursing INSPIRE program has been expanded to offer an 8-week, paid educational experience (four days per week) for eligible local students interested in exploring a career in nursing. Running each summer from June to August, the program welcomes applications from juniors at Cristo Rey St. Martin College Prep, Highland Park, North Chicago, Round Lake, and Waukegan High Schools.
- Chicago Medical School's Mini Medical School has been expanded to include two additional elementary and one middle school from the Mundelein and Diamond Lake communities. This program is funded by a 5-year grant from the US Department of Education.
- A Faculty and Staff Diversity Action Plan is currently under review to ensure compliance with federal executive orders, constitutional protections, and civil rights requirements.

LIFE *in* DISCOVERY