Working Document:

Transforming Tomorrow through Opportunity and Excellence: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Strategic Plan
Approach to Planning

The current document represents the culmination of a comprehensive effort to 1) gather feedback from a variety of key stakeholders on the University’s current status, strengths, challenges, and opportunities in order to inform its future direction, and 2) create a strategic framework that will lead us into the future. This effort was launched in fall of 2014 with a series of over 40 focus groups coordinated by Provost Dunn; in the spring of 2016, Provost Dunn appointed a strategic planning committee and spearheaded the summarization and distillation of themes from feedback gathered throughout the year. Upon his arrival in fall of 2015, Chancellor Gilliam collaborated with Provost Dunn to generate a proposed strategic framework for the University. This framework was vetted via focus groups, meetings, and online outreach with key constituencies. During the current semester, Chancellor Gilliam has taken time to consolidate his growing knowledge of the strengths and needs of the University and to refine his thoughts on the future of the University based on his enhanced understanding. The approach to strategic planning contained in this document represents the framework to date.

As indicated in Figure 1 below, there is more work to do. The next step is to disseminate this framework to departments, offices, schools, units, and divisions so they can determine the ways in which they will contribute to the plan. This work will begin over the summer and continue into the fall semester. As we receive input from those at the forefront of doing the good work of the University, it is likely that the university-wide framework will be further refined. In this way, our approach to planning has been and will continue to be both top-down and bottom-up.
Foundational Goals

There are four fundamental goals that are core to our identity and central to our mission and vision. These goals are key to the success of our University and form the long-standing backbone of who we are and what we do as an institution of higher education. Embedded in these goals are the concepts of diversity and inclusiveness – ideas that manifest added strength to our university community and provide a richer educational experience for all. Possible indicators for each of the four goals are listed after each, and will be refined after additional input. These will comprise the core set of indicators used to track the overall status of the University.

1. Student Success

The success of our students is paramount to our success as a university. Student success includes positive outcomes along an array of dimensions, including academic performance, physical health, psychosocial well-being, and preparation for future endeavors. A core tenet of this theme is that success be attainable for all UNCG students, regardless of background. Possible indicators of student success include:
• Retention rates (overall and by demographic group)
• 6 year graduation rates (overall and by demographic group)
• Baccalaureate degrees awarded (overall and by demographic group)
• Doctoral degrees awarded (overall and by demographic group)

2. Faculty Excellence

The faculty is the core of the academic enterprise. To be sure, the strength of our faculty dictate the quality of students’ academic experiences; the rigor and impact of research, scholarship, and creative activities; and the quality of community engagement. We believe a strong and diverse faculty should represent a variety of methodologies and analytic frameworks. We therefore expect a distribution of approaches across the faculty, ranging from basic bench science to the more applied subjects. Because of the rich and varied nature of our faculty, excellence is best defined as a standard of achievement that is relevant to the particular discipline or approach. Possible indicators of Faculty Excellence include:

• Faculty Awards for teaching, research, scholarship, and creative activities
• Faculty holding endowed chairs
• Research expenditures
• Faculty demographics by discipline
• Faculty membership on and participation in review panels, editorial boards for scholarly publications, and other external initiatives based on expertise and prestige

3. Enhanced Reputation

How the University is viewed by the external community plays a significant role in attracting quality students for admission; garnering donor support; being awarded external funding for research and other projects; and maintaining relative autonomy in a highly regulated environment. Possible indicators of Enhanced Reputation include:

• Number of students who apply for admission (undergraduate and graduate; overall and by demographic group)
• Percentage of admitted students who enroll
• Total enrollment (undergraduate and graduate; overall and by demographic group)
• High school GPA of admitted students
- Average ACT/SAT composite score of admitted students
- Amount of earned media.

4. Sustainable Resources

A significant challenge to our future success is the availability of resources, financial and otherwise. Our ability to grow existing areas of strength, develop new areas of distinction, provide rich experiences for our students, and attract and retain the best and brightest faculty, staff, and students is directly related to the resources available to us. In an increasingly competitive funding environment, this is an increasingly difficult challenge. Possible indicators of Sustainable Resources include:

- Total sponsored awards
- New gifts and pledges
- New undergraduate scholarships
- New graduate scholarships
- Student debt at graduation
- Utilization rates of campus facilities
- Utility consumption rates (e.g., water and power)
- Use of open source learning materials

Strategic Framework

The Foundational Goals capture the core areas fundamental to being a successful 21st century public research university. Building upon and contributing to the Foundational Goals, the Strategic Framework provides parameters for specific activities, programs, and initiatives that will contribute to Student Success, Faculty Excellence, an Enhanced Reputation, and Sustainable Resources. The Framework is built upon two core elements: Areas of Transformation, and Areas of Strategic Focus. The Areas of Transformation represent the core areas of our mission, and are key drivers of our day-to-day work. The Areas of Strategic Focus identify key areas that have emerged as current and promising areas of strength and will serve as focal areas for the transformation of students, knowledge, and the region (See Figure 2). As such, resource allocation will be directed to these areas over the coming years.
Figure 2: Transforming Tomorrow through Opportunity and Excellence: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Strategic Plan

Student Transformation

Knowledge Transformation

Regional Transformation

Health and Wellness

Vibrant Communities

Global Connections

Student Success

Faculty Excellence

Enhanced Reputation

Sustainable Resources
Transformation: A Core Concept

Transformation is at the heart of higher education. Through exposure to different perspectives, opportunities to explore both a breadth and depth of topics, and interaction with fellow Spartans, students leave our campus as people significantly different than when they joined us. New knowledge is generated by critical analysis, artistic expression, experimentation, and translation, and contributes to solutions for complex problems. As the University grows, so does our community. Transformation is conceived as a pervasive and enduring process driving the University forward.

1. **Student Transformation** occurs when students acquire knowledge and develop skills and habits of mind necessary to be life-long learners, informed and engaged members of society, and successful in life and work. This is accomplished through a variety of learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom. Experiential learning, study abroad, service learning, student leadership opportunities and extracurricular activities all contribute to student transformation. Consistent with our history of and commitment to providing opportunity for all, all UNCG students, regardless of background, should have equitable access to a high-quality, transformative educational experience as members of the Spartan community.

2. **Knowledge Transformation** occurs when understanding is enhanced through research, creative activity, critical analysis, and translating research to practice. UNC Greensboro faculty build upon the existing knowledge base, grow and refine the disciplines, reach across disciplinary boundaries to address complex problems, and critically examine pressing social issues through multiple lenses. Their active role in knowledge transformation transfers to the classroom, allowing faculty to bring cutting edge perspectives to their students. Opportunities for undergraduate students to actively engage in research provide a unique insight into analysis and generation of new knowledge, and opportunities for graduate students to engage in research are well-established as an essential part of their professionalization in their given field. Consistent with our University values, research and creative activity related to access, equity, and disparities are a consistent strength.

3. **Regional Transformation** occurs when local economies are strong and well-aligned with current and future needs, and when equitable access is provided to a reasonable standard of living and quality of life for all. UNCG contributes to regional transformation by collaborating with community partners to move forward
common goals, serving as a partner to enhance and sustain a healthy and prosperous environment, providing educational, research, and creative capacity to the region, and serving as a partner in the economic development of our region.

**Strategic Areas of Focus: What Distinguishes Us**

UNCG is a comprehensive university with a College of Arts and Sciences and six professional schools providing expertise in business and economics; nursing; education; health and human performance; music, theater and dance; and nanoscience. The following three themes represent current strengths of the institution and areas of focus for the next five years. These areas will serve as focal points for allocation of resources to foster transformation of students, knowledge, and our region.

1. **Health and Wellness** – Teaching, research, and service related to health and wellness is broadly defined to include the many aspects of individual well-being, as well as the aspects of the physical, cultural, historical, educational, and economic contexts in which people learn, work, and live. Health is a holistic concept and includes the many dimensions necessary for individuals to cope, adapt, grow, and develop. Health encompasses predictors and indicators of the state of the human condition. This includes the areas of physical, mental, social, environmental, economic, and public health. UNC Greensboro will strengthen its focus on improving health and well-being by catalyzing academic programs, research initiatives, and community engagement activities related to this focal area.

2. **Vibrant Communities** – Vibrant communities are those with a high quality of life for all members. Characteristics of vibrant communities include opportunities for cultural enrichment, equitable access to high quality education and social support services, a just standard of living, and a flourishing economy. A culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, a thriving creative and arts scene, and a milieu of rich intellectual exchange and open discourse are hallmarks of vibrant communities. Vibrant communities provide safe, supportive, and responsive developmental environments for all of their members. Vibrant communities demonstrate sustainably-minded practices, serving as stewards of the environment to maintain their vibrancy for future generations.

3. **Global Connections** – Technological and social changes have resulted in a highly interconnected world. The theme of Global Connections grows out of the recognition that students need to understand both the local and global, and their relationship to each other. For example, knowledge of the history, language,
tradition, religion, creative expression, and political mores found in diverse cultures across the globe helps us to better understand others and ourselves. Implications for student, knowledge, and regional transformation include the enhancement and development of exchanges and internships, cross-cultural research projects, globally diverse cultural events, and academic assignments that promote intercultural understanding, awareness, and appreciation. Success in this area will result in UNC Greensboro graduates who are well prepared to live in a “global society”, whether experiencing global connections through travel or by interacting with people from diverse cultures and nations in their local communities.

**Putting it all Together: Strategic Framework Goals**

The interaction of the Areas of Transformation and Areas of Strategic Focus results in a matrix with nine defined directions for growth. Table 1 contains University-level goals designed to provide further guidance for the larger campus community as they determine the ways in which they will contribute to the plan. They are intended to set the general tone for the direction of the University and to provide parameters within which campus units can develop goals, objectives, activities, and metrics that will contribute to the larger success of the plan.
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<th>Student Transformation</th>
<th>Knowledge Transformation</th>
<th>Regional Transformation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health and Wellness</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNCG students will benefit</strong> from exposure to the concept of health and wellness through scientific, cultural, historical, personal, equity, and profession-based perspectives via curricular offerings, experiential learning opportunities, professional development, evidence-based programs, and direct services that promote understanding and action.</td>
<td><strong>UNCG will enhance understanding</strong> in the areas of health and wellness, health disparities, and the health professions by expanding research, creative activity, and translation of research to practice in order to strengthen both our contribution to the field and the quality of our academic programs.</td>
<td><strong>UNCG will be an active partner</strong> in facilitating equitable access to health and wellness in our community through engagement in basic and applied research, implementation and evaluation of evidence-based programs and policies, and involvement of students in community organizations and agencies.</td>
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<td><strong>Vibrant Communities</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNCG students will benefit</strong> from being part of a campus community that is safe, supportive, inclusive and responsive; provides rich and varied opportunities for artistic, creative, cultural, and intellectual exploration; promotes innovation and entrepreneurship; and models best practices in sustainability.</td>
<td><strong>UNCG will enhance understanding</strong> of the elements that generate vibrant communities, processes that contribute to inclusive and responsive communities, and factors that contribute to equitable access to vibrant experiences both within and across communities.</td>
<td><strong>UNCG will be an active partner</strong> in contributing to the vibrancy of our larger community by promoting equitable access to opportunities for cultural enrichment, the fine and performing arts, high quality PK-12 education, economic development, robust support social support services, intellectual discourse, and sustainable resources.</td>
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<td><strong>Global Connections</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNCG students will benefit</strong> from experiences that foster the growth of the knowledge, skills, and perspectives necessary for them to engage effectively with the diverse global community of the 21st century.</td>
<td><strong>UNCG will enhance understanding</strong> of and appreciation for the ways in which history, language, tradition, religion, creative expression, politics, economics, and social norms contribute to the interaction of individuals and organizations from diverse cultures around the globe.</td>
<td><strong>UNCG will be an active partner</strong> in catalyzing connections among the diverse global cultures and communities represented on our campus and in our region by sharing knowledge, experiences, and events and by promoting an environment in which global connections can grow and thrive.</td>
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Assessing Progress

Tracking progress toward actualization of the goals set forth in the strategic plan is an iterative process, predicated on a strong orientation toward data-informed decision-making and sustained and coordinated data collection and analysis. Once goals are finalized and input is received from the larger campus community, metrics for assessing the University-level goals will be determined. Each individual unit will also determine metrics to track progress related to their own goals. As illustrated in Figure 2, there are multiple components to the assessment process. Because this is cyclical in nature, the quality with which any one step is completed has implications for the quality of the remaining process. Steps in this process include:

1. Determine Goals and Objectives – Goals should be specific, measureable, and time-bound. They should also be aspirational. Objectives are more concrete and achievable steps toward meeting larger goals. A logic model framework for planning change can be helpful in determining points of incremental progress.

2. Determine Indicators of Progress – These can be quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative metrics should be clearly defined, measurable, and time-bound. Qualitative indicators can often provide more nuanced information that can help contextualize trends in the quantitative metrics. The method and source of data collection should be clearly specified for both. Be sure to research existing data sources available to you before designing new data collection schemas. Remember to ask yourself “Will this information be a direct indication of progress toward achieving my goal or objective?” Identify benchmarks for key indicators to give you a snapshot of your progress.

3. Collect Data – Involve those who will need to help you collect data early and be aware of timing issues related to both the academic and fiscal calendars. Document the source of data, when it was collected, and the sample from whom it was collected. Look at it closely to make sure it is “clean”.

4. Distill Progress from Indicators – Comparing findings against benchmarks, analyzing trends across time, and looking for consistency across multiple indicators are common approaches to distilling progress.

5. Determine What Worked and What Didn’t – If data suggest that progress is not being made, ancillary data sources can help determine what is and is not working. This can mean that a new approach to achieving a goal is needed, that more time is needed for progress to occur, or that circumstances have changed and made achieving the goal more difficult or impossible.
6. **Determine Goals and Objectives** – The determinations in Step 5 provide feedback for the development of subsequent goals and objectives. Redirection or refinement of prior goals may be needed. In some cases, goals may need to be postponed or eliminated altogether in response to significant internal or external changes.

**Figure 2: Assessment Cycle**

*Operationalizing Assessment at UNC Greensboro*

The purpose of assessment is to address the following questions with regard to the Strategic Plan:

1. Is the plan being implemented as intended across the University?
2. Is the plan driving the University toward its goals? Is progress being made? Are there unintended impacts?
3. Are revisions or refinements needed for the plan to be responsive and practical given changing dynamics internal or external to the University?

The Chancellor’s Office, working with key senior administrators and the Strategic Planning Committee, will oversee the assessment of progress toward the Strategic
Plan. This will include coordinating with several existing mechanisms on campus for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data and institutional effectiveness.

1. Office of Institutional Research – The mission of the Office of Institutional Research is to collect, analyze, and disseminate information in support of institutional planning, policy formulation, and decision making. This office is charged with stewarding data related to many aspects of the university, including student demographics, student credit hours, faculty work load, and campus-wide surveys. They are a key resource for assessing progress toward the strategic plan.

2. Office of Assessment and Accreditation – The mission of the Office of Assessment and Accreditation is to support the University by leading activities related to University-wide accreditation and institutional effectiveness. The office provides consultation, training and administrative and technical support related to assessment and strategic planning activities. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) stipulates as a core requirement that "The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission." To meet this requirement, this office provides coordination and oversight for annual reporting on progress toward administrative and academic goals. They are key partners in the strategic planning process; their existing annual reporting process will be realigned to become the primary mechanism for campus-wide reporting related to the strategic plan.

Benchmarking plays an important role in assessment of progress toward larger goals. Agreed upon core indicators will be shared with the internal and external community to allow for a common understanding of the status of the University and areas in which progress has and has not been made. An interactive website that displays trends across time is ideal for this purpose. See http://metrics.vcu.edu/ for an example of this format.

**Guiding Assumptions and Principles**

Data collection and analysis can become unwieldy, unfocused, and inefficient in large systems such as ours. Progress can be difficult to distill when gathering and
analyzing data from multiple units of analysis (e.g., departments, schools, divisions) which have distinct goals and indicators of progress. Below are assumptions and principles to inform this complex process.

1. Both quantitative and qualitative data provide important information regarding plan progress.
2. Progress toward department/office/unit/division (micro-level) goals linked to the strategic plan directly and indirectly contributes to progress toward university-wide (macro-level) goals.
3. Progress toward long-term goals can be better monitored when short-term and intermediate-term indicators are identified and tracked. Metrics may be used to track both process (formative feedback) and outcome (summative feedback).
4. Indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, are more likely to be useful when they are developed in consultation with the individuals who work most closely in the areas targeted for change or improvement.
5. Data are not acontextual, therefore care should be used to interpret indicators in context. Qualitative indicators often can help with this.
6. Measurement error is always a possibility when collecting data; the use of multiple indicators increases confidence in conclusions.
7. As much as possible, assessment should be based on existing sources of data and existing mechanisms for collection and analysis.
8. As much as possible, individuals whose roles include data collection and analysis should be primarily tasked with this responsibility.

**Resourcing the Plan**

Successful implementation of the *Transforming Tomorrow* plan will require careful consideration and astute utilization of our resources. These resources include:

1. **Human Capital**
   Our people are our greatest asset, and we should invest in them wisely. This includes hiring and developing individuals with the skills, talent, motivation, creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, and knowledge to lead the university toward unequivocally achieving its mission and vision. Getting the right people into the right places is critical to the success of the strategic plan. Competition for exceptional faculty is intense; both hiring and retaining high quality faculty has become increasingly challenging. These dynamics make intentionality and strategy even more important when opportunities to hire
arise. The same can be said about attracting and retaining high quality staff. Opportunities for professional development will be important for enhancing the capacity of individuals and the university to achieve the strategic plan goals.

2. **Campus Infrastructure**
The quality of our physical facilities, technological capacity, and information resources are core assets in our quest to achieve our goals. Aligning our decisions about and investments in infrastructure with the strategic plan is necessary for our faculty, staff, and students to have the tools they need to facilitate transformation. This will require coordination and collaboration to ensure that the needs of people are instrumental in shaping the design of the infrastructure. This includes a commitment to fostering a proactive and agile organizational structure that can be responsive to challenges and opportunities and values excellence in customer service.

3. **Fiscal Resources**
The financial health of the university underlies our ability to maximize the quality of both our human capital and campus infrastructure; is key to our ability to sustain our mission to provide access, opportunity, and excellence to a diverse student body through financial aid and student support services; and is crucial to attracting, retaining, and supporting talented faculty and staff. Alignment of financial decisions with the goals of the plan, careful and considered stewardship of our fiscal resources, and diversification of funding sources will foster success of the plan. Because our core funding model is based on student credit hours, enrollment management is a critical component of the financial health of the University.

4. **Climate and Culture**
Talented people, a state-of-the-art infrastructure, and adequate fiscal resources are necessary - but not sufficient - to facilitating success of the strategic plan. Climate and culture are the glue that binds the university together – the atmosphere that sets the tone for our everyday interactions with each other, and that either helps or hinders our ability to remain united during good times and bad. A positive climate and culture of honesty, integrity, professionalism, inclusiveness, accountability, and transparency are essential to creating the context in which the many resources of the university can culminate in achieving the ambitious direction we have set for ourselves. Publicly stating our core values, and revisiting them often, will
keep this center of mind. Recognizing and acknowledging when our climate and culture are in need of attention will be essential to maintaining forward momentum.

**Allocation of resources**

In an increasingly constrained and competitive funding environment, strategic allocation and investment of resources is critical. To the extent possible, seed money will be made available on a competitive basis to fund planning and implementation of new or substantially revised initiatives related to the Strategic Plan. In general, resources will be made available in response to requests that

1. Provide a coherent and thoughtful rationale for why they support the Strategic Plan;
2. Are conceptualized with effectiveness and efficiency in mind;
3. Build capacity for longer term effectiveness;
4. Have a clear plan for sustainability, financially and otherwise;
5. Acknowledge potential impact on other related programs, functions, or people; and
6. Provide a clear plan for assessing progress.