

# **Giant Steps: Transforming Tomorrow through Opportunity and Excellence**

## **The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Strategic Plan**

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### **Preamble**

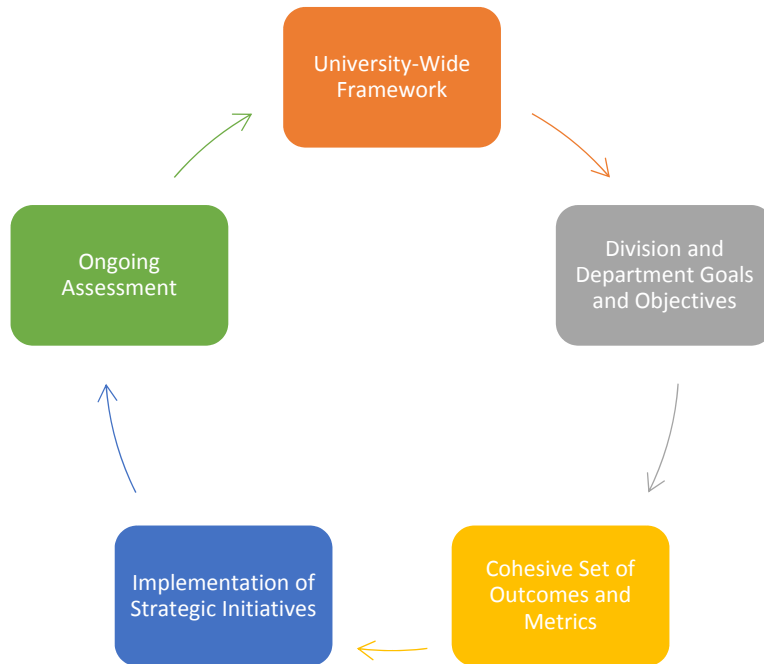
Higher education conveys the promise of transformative experience, enhancing the quality of life for the individual student and enriching society through the contributions gained from an educated populace. The pathways that higher education institutions have traditionally taken to provide these transformational experiences, though, should no longer be taken for granted. Increasingly, higher education is being asked not just to tell individual stories of success, but to provide more convincing evidence that demonstrates the value of postsecondary education for both individuals and the larger community. This time of constrained resources and rapid change demands that we all demonstrate thoughtful, informed decision-making – students, families, faculty, staff, and policy makers alike. To control our own destiny as an institution, it is wise that we proactively set high expectations related to our own productivity and stewardship of the scarce resources invested in us by students, families, and the public.

This strategic plan serves to do just that by providing a roadmap to the year 2020 and beyond. The intended impact of the plan is to foster a steep trajectory of change as the University mobilizes its talent and resources to become a recognized research university providing a transformational education to a richly diverse student body. While an emphasis on strategic enrollment growth will continue, this plan outlines focused areas of transformation that will unfold as UNCG focuses on addressing 21<sup>st</sup> century issues and problems related to health and wellbeing, vibrant communities, and globalization. This streamlined plan consisting of a narrowly focused set of initiatives will undergird our University's continued trajectory of success. With this new strategic plan, we stand poised to embrace the challenges and opportunities of a new era; we stand ready to develop and adopt best practices; and we stand ready to become an exemplar of the 21<sup>st</sup> century research university.

### **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 the fall of 2014 with a series of over 40 focus groups coordinated by Provost Dunn. In the spring of 2015, Provost Dunn appointed a strategic planning committee and spearheaded the summarization and distillation of themes from feedback gathered throughout the year; further opportunities for feedback were provided via an online portal. 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 2016 spring semester, Chancellor Gilliam took 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. After further feedback from the Provost and Deans on the framework during the early part of the Fall, 2016 semester, the framework was presented to and endorsed by the Board of Trustees. The approach to strategic planning contained in this document represents the framework to date.

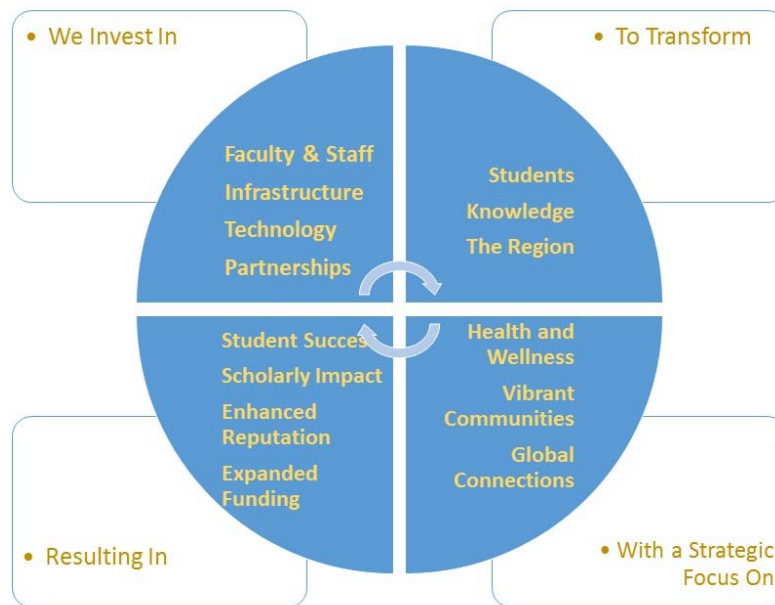
As the graphic below indicates, there is more work to do. The next step is to disseminate this framework to the academic units (schools and colleges, student affairs, and research and economic development) so they can determine the ways in which they will contribute to the plan. This work will take place over the remainder of the fall semester. As we receive this input, more nuanced areas of emphasis or possibilities for cross-cutting collaboration may emerge. In this way, our approach to planning has been and will continue to be iterative, and both top-down and bottom-up.



## Larger Context for the Strategic Plan

### *Relationship to Larger Mission and Vision*

There are varied approaches to framing strategic plans. Some aim to be inclusive of all activities that take place within the organization, providing a general direction for all work that is done. We have chosen to develop a narrowly focused plan, that while build around the core elements of our mission, defines a few area of thematic focus. With that said, strategic plans serve as a tool, and take place within a larger context. Our University is a large, multi-layered institution, itself nested within a system, and so keeping the bigger picture in mind is important. The graphic below is an attempt to graphically represent where the strategic plan falls into the larger cycle of the University. The upper left quadrant represents the investments we make – the resources we need – to carry out our mission. The bottom left quadrant reminds us that regardless of the specific elements of any given strategic plan, there are core outcomes that are fundamental to who we are as a University. The upper right quadrant represents the core elements of our mission and vision – the key areas we seek to transform – and the bottom right quadrant represents the thematic areas we have identified as our most promising focal areas, given the interaction of our strengths and the larger needs of the community, for the next five years.



### *Embeddedness in Meta Narrative*

One of the first thought pieces Chancellor Gilliam created when he arrived at UNCG was what he describes as our Meta Narrative. This encompasses the characteristics of our University that immediately stood out to him, and that he believes speak to legacies that we should continue to honor as we move forward. The Meta Narrative comprises four elements:

- **Opportunity for All.** From our beginnings as school for women through our evolution into a college for women and finally to a university, UNCG has provided high quality postsecondary education to students underrepresented among the college-going population. We currently serve a richly diverse student body and are recognized for not just providing access, but also avenues to success, for all of our students.
- **Student Oriented.** From our beginnings as a teacher’s college to our current emphasis on experiential learning and undergraduate research, the practice of teaching and the use of impactful pedagogy has been at the core of our institution.
- **Research Intensive.** A more recent part of our history, UNCG has embraced the call to engage in scholarship and creative activities that advance our disciplines and address societal challenges, at the same time maintaining remaining student oriented through the integration of students into the research process and new knowledge into the classroom setting.
- **Shared Place and Shared Fate.** As a public institution of the state of North Carolina, a substantial amount of our students come from central North Carolina and surrounding areas. As a key figure in the Greensboro landscape, we are intricately tied to our local and regional community. We share a place, a fate, and a responsibility for being an active partner in the future of both.

## Overall Framework

The strategic framework is anchored by the three areas of transformation - Student Transformation, Knowledge Transformation, and Regional Transformation – and features three cross-cutting, cross-disciplinary thematic areas of focus – Health and Wellness, Vibrant Communities, and Global Connections.

### *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. The challenges and opportunities faced by our region are our challenges and opportunities, too. Transformation is conceived as a pervasive and enduring process driving the University forward.

- **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.
- **Knowledge Transformation** occurs when understanding is enhanced through research, creative activity, critical analysis, and translating research to practice. UNCG 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.
- **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, research intensive university with expertise in a board array of disciplines. The following three themes represent current strengths of the institution, each cross-disciplinary in

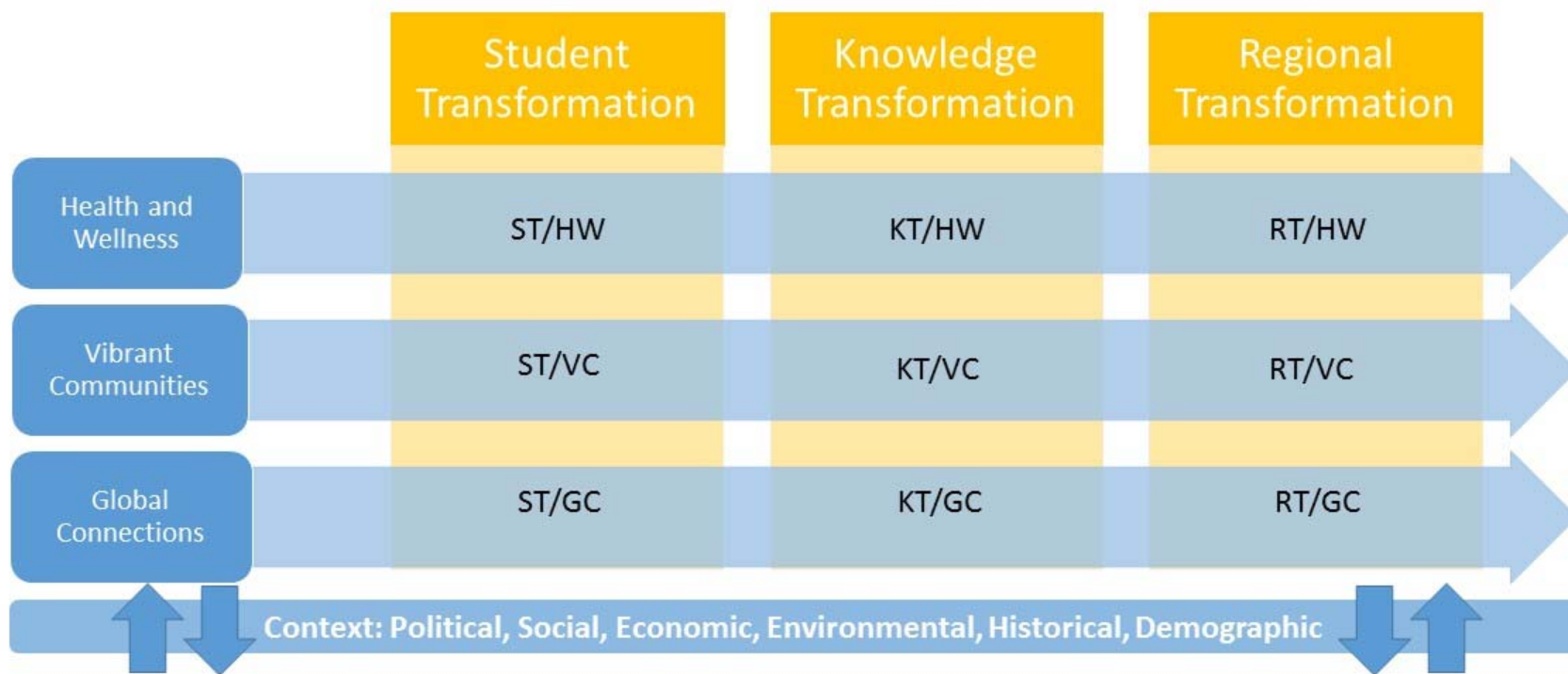
nature. These areas will serve as focal points for allocation of resources to foster transformation of students, knowledge, and our region.

- **Health and Wellness** – Health and Wellness is broadly defined to encompass the many dimensions necessary for individuals to cope, adapt, grow, and develop. This theme encompasses predictors and indicators of the state of the human condition, and scientific advances related to Health and Wellness. 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.
- **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. These theme includes an understanding of the role of individuals, systems, and their interplay in promoting Vibrant Communities. Vibrant Communities include a culture of inclusivity and responsiveness, providing safe and supportive environments for all of their members.
- **Global Connections** – Technological and social changes have resulted in a highly interconnected world. The theme of Global Connections encompasses the multiple ways in which individuals, organizations, and geographic and civic entities from around the world engage with each other. The history, language, tradition, religion, creative expression, economics, ethics, and political mores found in diverse cultures help us to better understand ourselves and others. Global Connections includes the implications of differences and similarities across the globe for human interaction and contemporary issues. Multiple perspectives brought by different disciplines and the power of transdisciplinary perspectives bring enhanced understanding to Global Connections. 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.

### ***At the Intersection: The Strategic Framework***

The interaction of the Areas of Transformation and Areas of Strategic Focus results in a matrix with nine defined directions for growth. Embedded in the Meta-Narrative and interacting with the political, social, economic, environmental, historical, and demographic contexts in which the University is nested, this framework will guide the goals we set for ourselves over the course of the next five years.

# Meta-Narrative: Opportunity and Access, Research-Intensive, Student-Oriented, Shared Fate



## Goals for 2017

As a starting point, initial goal areas have been specified within each of the areas of transformation (i.e., goals for student, knowledge, and regional transformation) (see graphic below). These are broadly stated and the intent is for the academic affairs units to identify initiatives specific to their programs that can contribute to these broader goals. We will work to enhance and increase both the opportunities for and impact of the areas identified below.

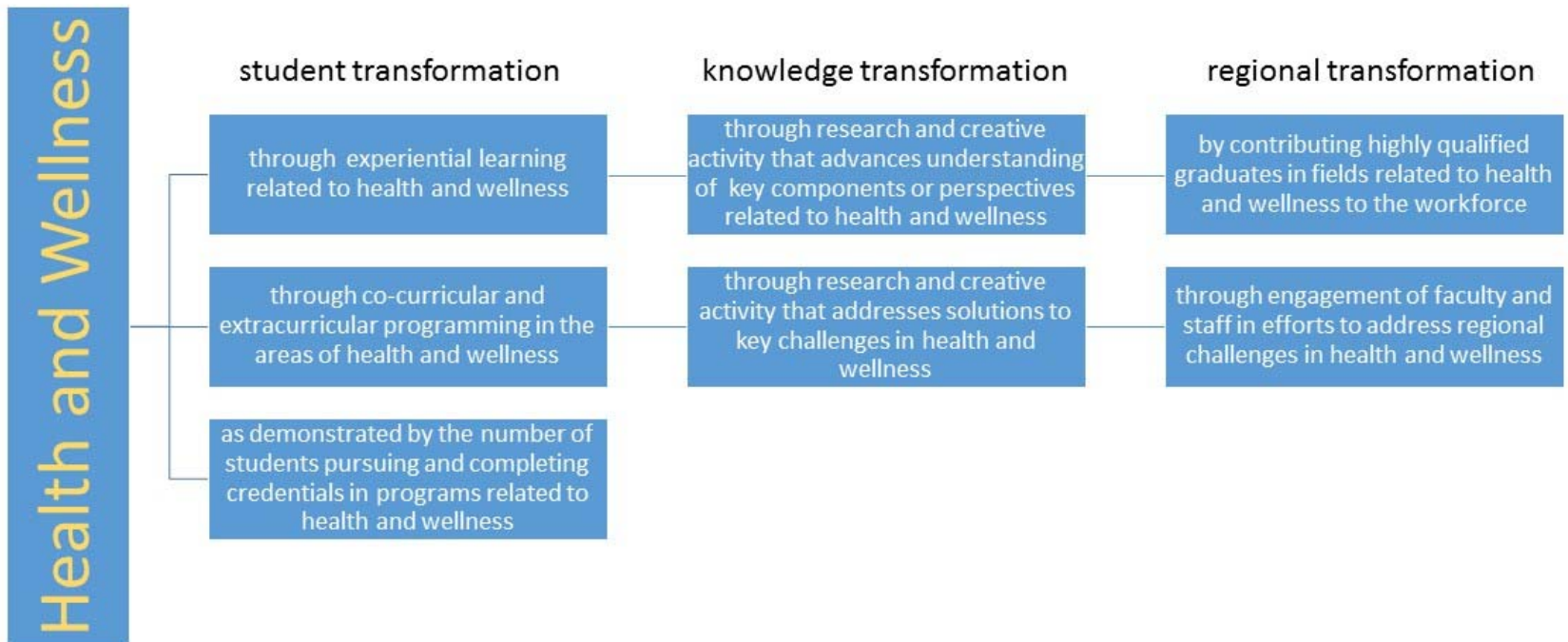
## Transformation: Goal Areas Across Strategic Themes



### *Goals within Strategic Themes*

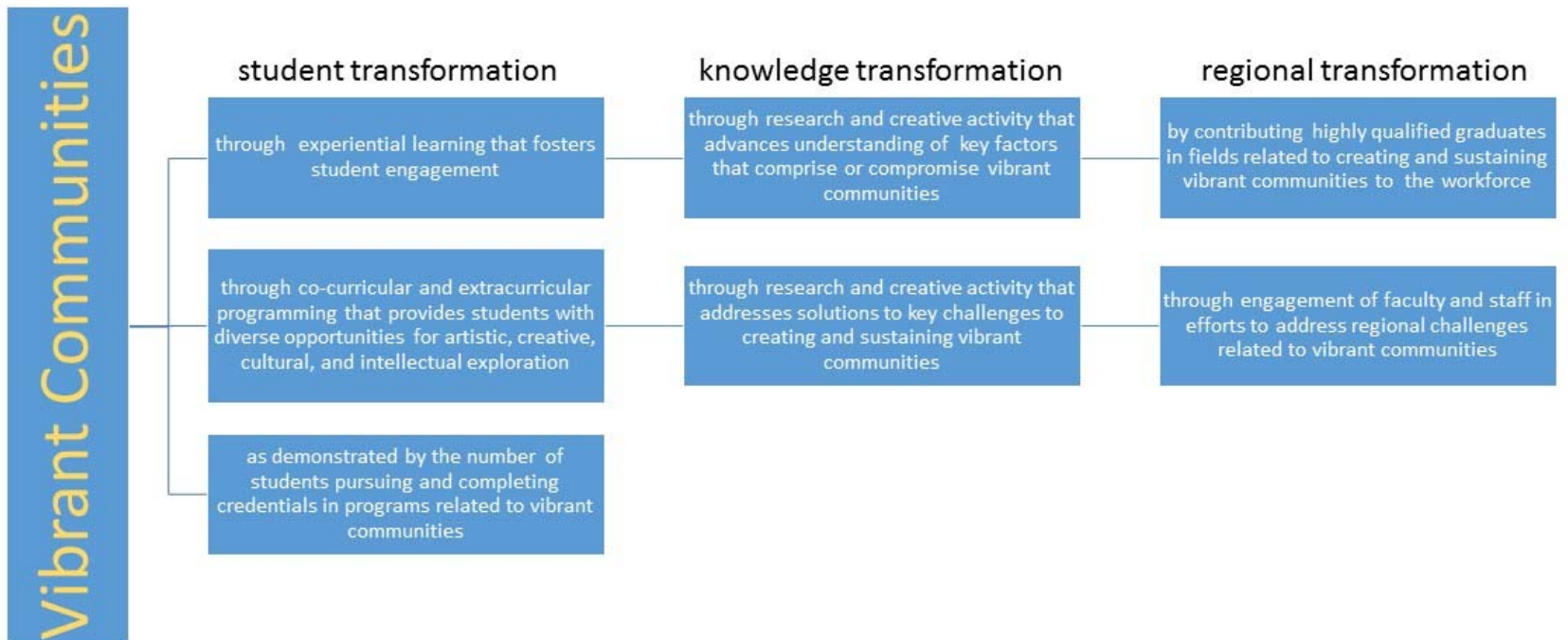
The general goal areas within the areas of transformation are further adapted accordingly across the three thematic areas. Our hope is that the parallelism across the themes provides for an easily understood framework.

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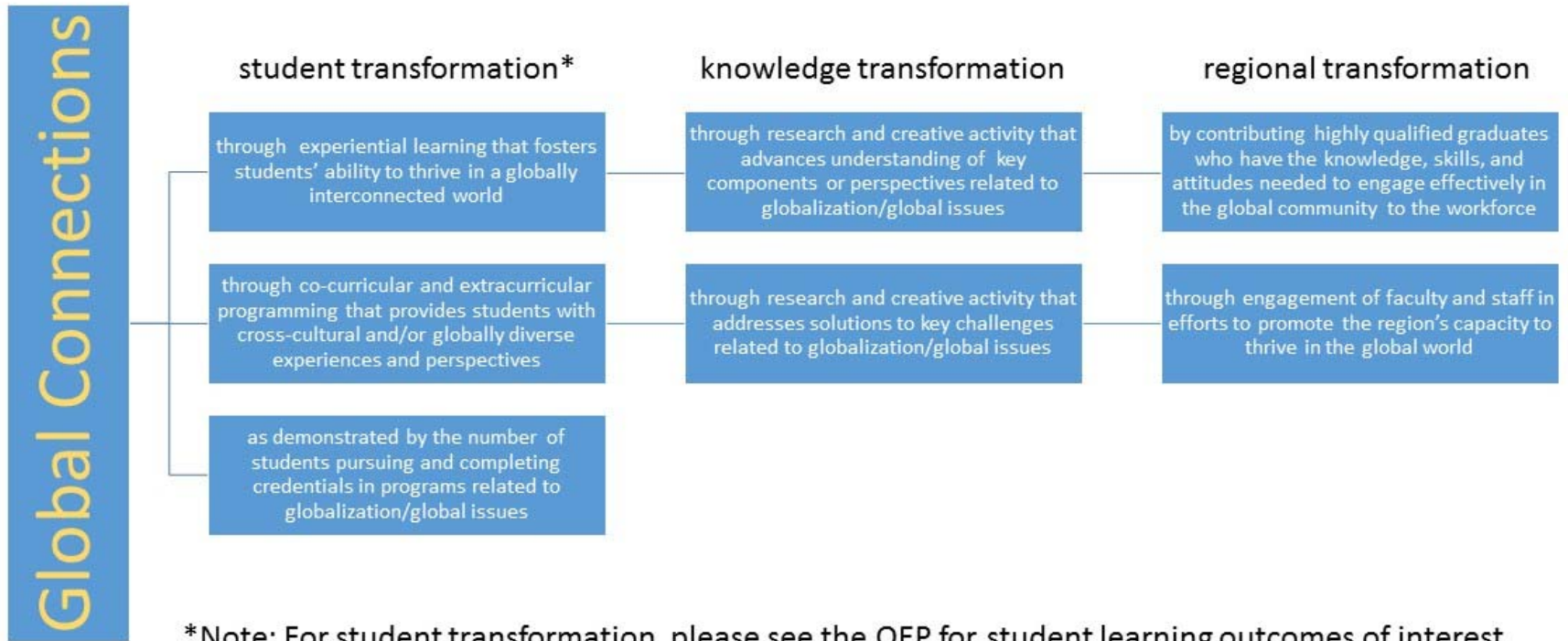




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# Promote...



## **Metrics and Measurement: 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. As each individual unit reports on initiatives that will contribute to the plan, they should determine metrics to track progress related to their own goals. At the same time, University-level metrics will be finalized and processes put in place to follow them over time. As illustrated in the graphic below, 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.

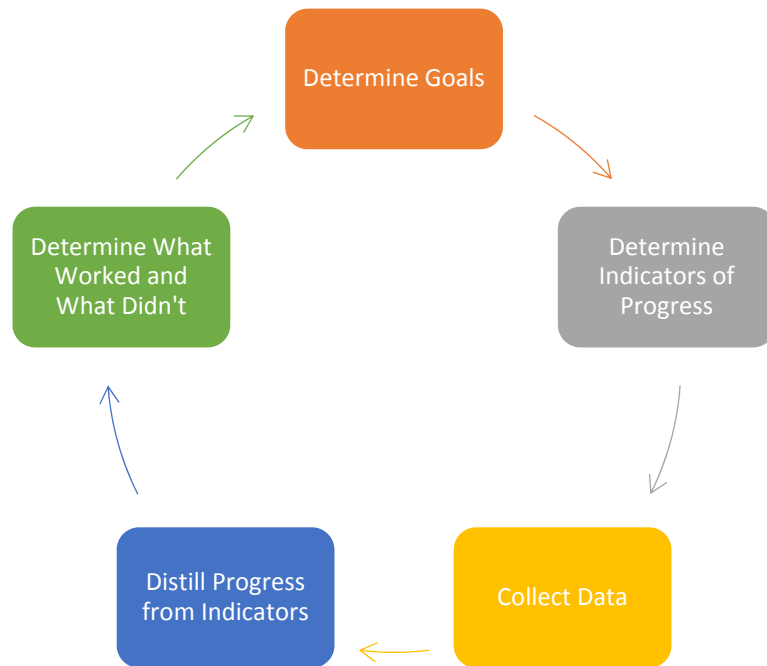
### *In the Short-Term: Determining Indicators of Progress Related to Each Goal*

Indicators of progress 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. Think about the method and source of data collection for both, and 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?”. Consider identifying benchmarks for key indicators to give you a snapshot of your progress. A logic model framework may be helpful in determining indicators of incremental progress for goals that will require multiple steps to achieve.

### *In the Long-Term: Tracking Progress*

Below is a description of the process for tracking progress once we begin implementation. It may help to consider the larger process as you are thinking about metrics.

1. **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”.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.



### *Operationalizing Assessment at UNC Greensboro*

For even more context, 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 and Provost’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.

*Of Note: 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.

## Example Metrics

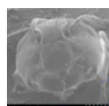
Below are example metrics for each of the areas of transformation. These are *examples* to help your process. Of note, please consult the QEP for additional metrics outlined for student transformation goals in the area of Global Connections.

## Example Metrics



### Student

- Participation rates
- Achievement of related student learning outcomes
- Enrollment, retention, and graduation rates



### Knowledge

- External funding
- Publications and presentations
- Performances and exhibits
- Rankings and ratings
- Awards



### Region

- Job placement indicators
- Employer feedback
- Participation rates
- Project-specific impacts
- External perceptions

## Supporting the Plan

Successful implementation of the *Transforming Tomorrow* plan will require careful consideration and astute utilization, and intentional effort to leverage and develop, our resources.

- **Talent Management.** 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.
- **Infrastructure, Technology, and Tools.** 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.

- **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.
- **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.

### *Initial Seed Funding*

The Provost, Office and Research and Economic Development, and University Teaching and Learning Center have designed a series of requests for proposals for seeding funding related to initiatives that support the launch of the new strategic plan. The three opportunities available are to support

- Research and Creative Activity
- Community Engaged Research and Creative Activity
- Teaching Innovations

For more detail, please consult the RFP documents.