

# Strategic Planning Committee

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# Strategic Planning Charge & Timeline

## Charge

To develop:

- a Mission Statement (*What is the core function/purpose of University College?*)
- a Vision Statement (*What do we want University College to be in the future?*)
- a 5-year Strategic plan (*What measurable actions do we need to take to reach that vision while ensuring that we fulfill our mission?*)

*Revised Timeline:*

- Rough draft of mission, vision, and plan by Sept 1, 2020
- Faculty discussion and revision, September-October, 2020
- Revision and final approval, November-December, 2020

# University College Mission Statement

University College empowers all VCU students to think critically and practice civic responsibility by promoting agency, academic success, career achievement, lifelong learning, and active engagement in a diverse society. University College values our faculty and staff who dedicate their time and energy to this work.

## University College Vision Statement

UC will be an exemplar for high-impact, scalable educational practices that lead to success for all students by leveraging the first-year experience, interdisciplinary approaches, inclusive pedagogy, and community engagement.

## University College Themes

**Diversity of Faculty**--The VCU Strategic Plan, Quest 2025, states that “VCU strives to ensure a climate of mutual respect and trust where individuals of differing cultural backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are embraced, engaged and empowered to drive excellence and achieve success.” VCU recognizes that “individuals come to VCU with various ideas, experiences and strengths” which are assets to the university. The University College is committed to a workplace where everyone is valued. It is in this regard that this theme presents two goals that will drive and complement the other themes.

**Student Success**--Quest 2025 forms the basis for student achievement while they are at VCU and beyond as we provide the skills to help students reach their dreams. In support of VCU’s goals, the University College has three goals to address continued student success.

**Pedagogical Excellence**--As the entry point for the majority of first-year students, the University College seeks to promote an environment where faculty guide students successfully through exploration of the creative, critical thinking and problem solving processes. We also seek to help students engage in discourse and activities that will help them grapple with ideas and information they need to develop their own understanding. This plan presents four goals to address pedagogical excellence.

**Civic Engagement and Learning**---Quest 2025 states, “VCU seeks to learn from and use its role as an urban institution of higher education as an asset to serve as a full partner in supporting community progress and well-being.” With its various programs and initiatives, University College is committed to providing students with opportunities

beyond the traditional classroom setting. This plan sets out two goals in support of civic engagement and learning.

**Brand Recognition**--Quest 2025 sets a vision that aspires for “VCU to be recognized as a preeminent national urban public research university and academic health center...” As the entry point for most first-year students, the University College seeks to illuminate its distinctive curricula and programming. This plan presents four goals to expand and develop its brand. These goals support the university’s goals.

# Diversity of Faculty

Goal 1: Create a critical mass of talented University College faculty and staff that will fully represent the excellence and diversity of our students

## Strategies

- Increase faculty compensation to national averages.
- Bring Focused Inquiry teaching load in line with external review and WPA recommendations.
- Engage in direct recruitment of diverse faculty using “intentional, pre-search recruitment strategies,” like “reaching out to diverse chapters or caucuses in relevant professional associations in their disciplines” and doctoral departments at HBCUs (Actively Seeking Diverse Faculty).
- Provide bias, quality, and rigor recalibration for members of the faculty search committee before the recruitment process (Actively Seeking Diverse Faculty).
- Train more faculty as Recruitment Inclusive Champions (RICs).
- For Focused Inquiry and Interdisciplinary Studies faculty hiring, reduce the preferred qualifications for teaching experience to accommodate a more diverse applicant pool.
- Add research, training, or experience in diversity and inclusion as a preferred qualification for hiring.

## Expected Outcomes

- The faculty and hiring retention rates reflect the composition of the availability pools of exceptional talents in all applicable fields nationally.
- University College devotes the leadership and resources to sustain and enhance equity, inclusion, and diversity at VCU.
- Staff at all levels—including the executive and management levels—reflects the rich diversity of the national and local talent pools.
- University College faculty more closely represents the racial diversity of VCU students.
- A greater number of University College faculty and staff have expertise (research, training, experience) in diversity and inclusion.

## Possible Metrics

- % of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color----classification based on demographic data collected by HR) faculty
- # of new BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color----classification based on demographic data collected by HR) faculty hires
- % of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color----classification based on demographic data collected by HR) staff
- % of LGBTQ+ faculty\*
- # of LGBTQ+ hires\*
- % of LGBTQ+ staff\*
- Areas of expertise (collected for FI website)
- A dedicated officer of diversity, equity, and inclusion

- % of budget devoted to diversity, equity, and inclusion (ex: student or faculty programming directly addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion issues)

Note: In striving to make UC a place where faculty and staff of all kinds (background, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, age, class, etc.) want to work, no groups are excluded. The strategies and initiatives expressed here are a direct reflection of the lack of Black and Latinx employees in UC as identified by the Office of Institutional Equity, Effectiveness, and Success.

\* This information is not collected upon application or hire. This information, if provided, would be on a voluntary basis.

**Goal 2: Provide an environment in which underrepresented minorities and, therefore, all faculty can thrive professionally.**

### Strategies

- Regularly survey current faculty to determine what they need to thrive professionally and determine strategies to address evolving requests.
- Educate faculty (especially faculty from represented/overrepresented groups) on issues faced by faculty from underrepresented groups (e.g., subtle acts of exclusion otherwise known as microaggressions).
- Create a robust and curricula driven faculty mentorship program for both new and continuing faculty--to include but not be limited to discussion of promotion criteria and ways to become involved on campus. (Resources: Rockquemore's Inside Higher Ed Advice Column on mentorship).
- Expand yearly work plan goal setting to include three/six-year prep, practice, and service goals.
- Provide more opportunities for ongoing, small group, or anonymous feedback on individual departmental or college initiatives, curricula, programs, and services.
- Provide more access to and training and mentorship in finding and applying for grants, continuing education programs, and fellowships.
- Create a Faculty Director for Diversity and Inclusion within the college to develop programming, create networks for people of color, and serve as a liaison between the Department Chair or Directors and faculty of color.
- Create a Diversity Council that serves University College as an action-oriented group with members of two and three-year staggered terms.
- Support research that assesses diversity and inclusion issues by drawing on resources already available, such as FILL work-study students.

### Expected Outcomes

- All University College faculty and staff members report a strong sense of belonging and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully navigate and lead a diverse world.
- University College faculty of color report that they feel they have a voice in departmental decisions and have contributed meaningfully to the college's shape and direction.
- All University College faculty have access to career development opportunities.
- University College faculty is more broadly diverse.

## Metrics

- Biannual climate satisfaction survey results from IExcel
- Results from UC-designed survey
- Responses to feedback forms
- Mentorship program curriculum
- Level of participation in the mentorship program (e.g., # of participants, degree of sustained participation for individual participants)
- Work plan goal-setting framework
- Output of scholarship of teaching and learning related to diversity and inclusion

# Student Success

Goal 1: Significantly reduce the gaps in the success rates for students who complete UC programs, ensuring that we provide equitable instruction to all students, regardless of their demographic or economic background.

## Strategies

- Develop assessment measures to identify equity gaps in retention, graduation, and academic success.
- Develop capacity within UC to collect regular data and communicate findings to faculty and the wider university.
- Review and revise FI and IDS curricula to meet the needs of all students.
- Provide academic support that is equitable for all students.
- Develop opportunities and programming that are equitable for all students and support students' professional development and belonging.
- Seek student input on possible programming directions through surveys, focus groups, and a student/faculty advisory council.
- Implement training to reduce potential grading bias in FI and IDS courses.

## Expected Outcomes

- Assessment strategies will disclose existing gaps in academic success, such as graduation rates, retention rates, student satisfaction with academic programs, and participation in co-curricular activities).
- Assessment strategies will identify student needs and critical factors that prevent academic success.
- Academic support and other programming throughout University College will address the needs identified by assessment strategies.
- Gaps in success will be eliminated or significantly reduced so that all students succeed at an equal rate.
- Students will report that our programs provide them with beneficial social and professional opportunities.
- Updated curricula will meet the needs of a diverse population of students.
- UC faculty will have a greater understanding of grading bias and how it functions.

Metrics (These metrics coincide with Quest 2025. The metrics are directly related to outcomes)

- First- to second-year retention rates by demographic group
- Graduation rates in IDS by demographic group
- Student evaluations
- Creation of new courses that promote student academic success
- Participation in new courses that promote student academic success
- # of new programming initiatives
- Level of participation in student programming (e.g., # of participants, degree of sustained participation for individual participants)
- Results from surveys, interviews, and focus groups assessing student response to programming

- Co-curricular REAL Designated Activities
- Faculty evaluations of training on grading bias

Goal 2: UC will increase the scholarship funds available for Interdisciplinary Studies (BIS) majors and other students engaged in University College programs.

#### Strategies

- Research grants, fellowships, and entrepreneurship for undergraduates.
- Develop relationships with BIS alumni to build a donor base.
- Strengthen relationships with FI UTA alumni.
- Strengthen the relationship between the BIS Program and the National Scholarship Office.

#### Expected Outcomes

- Increased tuition scholarship opportunities for Interdisciplinary Studies majors
- Increased scholarship opportunities for Focused Inquiry UTAs
- Increased participation in VCU UROP and prestigious national scholarship programs

#### Metrics

- Increase in total funds awarded to BIS majors from UC
- Increase in total funds awarded to FI students
- Increase in total funds awarded to FI UTAs
- Number of BIS students participating in UROP program or applying for national scholarship programs

Goal 3: UC will strengthen the range of modalities it uses to deliver instruction, including the hybrid, online, and alternative term courses (i.e., short courses) it offers both in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program and the Focused Inquiry Program.

#### Strategies

- Encourage faculty to participate in programming sponsored by CTLE and Online@VCU to support online and hybrid pedagogy.
- Improve access to faculty development opportunities through online dissemination of pedagogical innovations to make sure we are making full use of our online tools and to share best practices.
- Develop and offer a 1-credit course on online learning.
- Integrate a unit on online learning into existing online courses.
- Pilot eight- and five-week courses in FI and/or IDS.

## Expected Outcomes

- Faculty will feel more confident about the strength of their online course offerings
- Students will express greater satisfaction with online and hybrid courses offered by University College faculty
- Student success in online and hybrid courses offered by University College faculty will increase

## Metrics

- % of hybrid, online, and alternative term courses within each program
- Assessment of the qualitative differences between FI core coursework (UNIV 111, 112, 200) that compares each model of delivery
- % of faculty with training certification in online and hybrid courses within each program
- Student evaluations for hybrid, online, and alternative term courses
- D/F/W rates for hybrid, online, and alternative term courses
- # of students who enroll in a 1-credit course on online learning
- Student evaluations of online learning course
- # of sections that integrate an online learning unit
- Student feedback on online learning unit
- Student feedback on alternative term courses
  
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# Pedagogical Excellence

Goal 1: Increase opportunities and funding for professional development, including more organizational support for faculty seeking to engage in professional development activities.

## Strategies

- Request increased funding from the University for course releases or sabbaticals for professional development pursuits, including research supporting the college's teaching mission, particularly in terms of core content and skills.
- Incentivize participation in professional organizations most relevant to UC's content, including CCCC, NCTE, AIS, etc.
- Provide financial support or course releases for faculty members to develop and participate in sustained programming related to teaching, such as week-long summer institutes or a series of presentations.
- Create a system for public reflection or presentation of individual professional development activities.
- Reduce the University College faculty teaching load to 3/3 to allow faculty the time and energy to engage in professional development opportunities and to collaborate with colleagues.

## Expected Outcomes

- Appreciable rise in funding dedicated to professional development
- Availability of sabbatical or course release for similarly demanding PD efforts
- Heightened attendance at conferences by a greater number of faculty
- Higher number of sustained programming, brown bags, symposia, and talks offered to faculty by faculty
- Increased recognition of the department through active participation in professional organizations and pedagogical publications

## Metrics

- The amount of increase in offerings of PD opportunities to faculty by faculty
- The number of conferences attended
- # of faculty who apply knowledge from PD based on faculty evaluations
- How faculty apply knowledge from PD based on faculty evaluations
- # of faculty with membership, participation, or leadership in community and professional organizations
- # of faculty publications and presentations, both locally and nationally

Goal 2: Increase the efficacy of pilot courses through wider faculty engagement (conducting, advising, observing); regular mid-pilot and post-pilot reporting and analysis; and more attention to implementing piloted ideas into the regular curriculum.

#### Strategies

- Incentivize participation in pilot programs, including collaborative pilots, by offering course releases or other remuneration.
- Conduct research on effectively conducting pilots, including documenting, analyzing, and reflecting on strengths and weaknesses.
- Create an FLC for those conducting pilots dedicated to documenting and reflecting on pilots to assist the Curriculum Committee's analysis.
- Create a system for public reflection or presentation of pilot structures and outcomes.
- Research and create pilots with distinct disciplinary focuses.

#### Expected Outcomes

- Higher participation of faculty with pilot programming
- Higher participation of faculty collaborating on pilots
- A clear, consistent, and evidence-based system for documenting and analyzing pilots
- Clearer and more-widely available documentation of pilots
- Stronger communication between faculty about the rationale for attempting pilots and effective strategies for implementing ideas
- Programming and courses that are tailored to specific populations
- Strengthening of relationships with other schools and disciplines within VCU

#### Metrics

- The number of proposed and actual pilots
- The number of collaborative pilots
- Assessment data from interviews soliciting faculty feedback on collaborative measures before, during, and after the actualization of a pilot
- Visible and accessible system of pilot documentation
- Platform for pilot documentation
- Student feedback on the efficacy of pilot programming

Goal 3: Encourage, incentivize, and develop additional models for pedagogical collaboration between faculty, GTAs, UTAs, and students.

#### Strategies

- Provide course releases or other remuneration for participation in collaborative pedagogy
- Research whether professors outside of UC would be interested in teaching, co-teaching, or collaborating on UC courses
- Create a program that would encourage professors outside of UC to teach, co-teach, or collaborate with UC faculty, and vice versa

- Research how UTA and GTA programs across the University and other colleges operate to tailor current programs to a more diverse group of disciplines
- Recruit faculty from disciplines not represented in UC to augment interdisciplinarity within FI
- Recruit more GTAs from disciplines not represented in UC to augment interdisciplinarity within FI
- Create a sustainable UTA program in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program
- Create a teaching fellowship for post-graduate GTAs.

### Expected Outcomes

- Increased pedagogical collaboration among UC faculty
- Increase in number of outside faculty members teaching in FI or collaborating with faculty in FI
- Greater number of co-taught classes within FI or across different departments and disciplines
- A more diverse set of disciplines represented by GTAs
- Growth in the number of UTAs and UTA mentors in IDS and UC

### Metrics

- Documented experiences and reports of co-teaching experience by the faculty involved
- Documented experiences and reports of GTA and UTA experiences by the students involved
- Assessment data from student feedback on the efficacy of a co-taught classroom
- The number of collaborative efforts between FI faculty and others across the university

## Goal 4: Develop additional modalities for the dissemination of professional development experiences and pedagogical innovation (beyond symposia and institutes)

### Strategies

- Create an organized online repository of professional development materials, including videos, write-ups, podcasts, and other multimodal products.
- Deputize the Focused Inquiry Outreach and Development Committee to brainstorm additional viable avenues to disseminate faculty's professional development experiences and innovations.
- Advertise the UTA and GTA programs to students, VCU, and the wider community.

### Expected Outcomes

- The establishment of an online repository for materials developed through professional development
- New methods of disseminating PD experiences
- Incorporation into the classroom of ideas, techniques, and strategies obtained through professional development

## Metrics

- # of publications and presentations on the scholarship of teaching and learning and core skills by faculty and staff
- # of methods of dissemination (e.g., podcasts, videos, write-ups)

# Civic Engagement and Learning

Goal 1: Develop and foster experiential and integrative learning that encourages students to engage in transformational and mutually beneficial relationships with the VCU and Richmond community.

## Strategies

- Curate resources to support teaching students to be critical and active participants in a global society to work toward the common good.
- Designate a full-time faculty member in University College to help develop new community partnerships, maintain existing partnerships, and develop service projects for the Common Book and courses that are not S-L designated.
- Increase the number of service-learning classes offered in University College, including Tier 2 and IDS courses, as research demonstrates participation in service-learning courses early in a student's college career has a positive correlation with retention.
- Better advertise service-learning options to students by increasing communication with advisors for incoming first-year students and better labeling those courses in Banner.
- Require service-learning instructors and instructors engaged in community projects to participate in ongoing training through the VCU Center for Community Engagement and Impact on best practices to engage with community partners.
- Provide scholarships for UC UTAs and SLTAs.
- Facilitate opportunities for UTAs and SLTAs to provide additional professional development opportunities for their students beyond their roles as UTAs and SLTAs in the classroom (e.g., applying for grants, submitting conference proposals, developing long-term community partnerships)
- Promote the new Career Readiness Skills minor as a way for students to integrate their experiential learning as part of their professional development.
- Collect data from community partners to learn if student engagement with them is meeting their needs.

## Expected Outcomes

- An increased ability to provide service opportunities and community project ideas for faculty and students who are not attached to service-learning designated courses, particularly in relation to Common Book programming
- More students will register in service-learning courses due to the increased course offerings; thus, student retention will improve
- Decreased D/F/W rates for UC courses due to increased student efficacy when course mapping
- An increased presence and recognition of service-learning and community-engaged work in the UC and beyond
- Measurable improvements for community partners that better align with their goals and objectives

- Enhanced student relationships with community partners that could lead to potential internships or jobs, advocacy, or activism on behalf of the community-based organization or organizations working toward similar goals
- Increased diversity in the UTA and SLTA program by removing financial barriers
- Increased opportunities for integrative learning that prepares students for careers
- An increased understanding of the extent student service-learning impacts community partners
- An increase in conference participation and publications from UTAs and SLTAs

## Metrics

- # of service-learning courses offered by program area and course number
- Clearer service-learning designations in Banner
- Decreased D/F/W rate for UC courses
- Feedback from community partners
- Student reflections on community-engaged work
- % of UTAs and SLTAs for UC courses by demographic group
- # of presentations and publications by UTAs and SLTAs

**Goal 2: Intentionally create and foster a learning environment where UC classrooms are safer spaces for frank discussions of inequality and the need for racial and economic justice.**

## Strategies

- Research strategies for the effective facilitation of safer/brave spaces of classroom discussion of racism and classism, especially in the First-Year Experience and Interdisciplinary Studies programs.
- Ensure that UC faculty are trained in these strategies, including during Fall and Spring Institutes, updating overtime as needed.
- Implementation: Lead students in safer/brave space conversations on race, class, and related identities and factors, emphasizing intersectionality as key.
- Utilize the Common Book program each year as an opportunity to encourage in-depth conversations on race, encouraging consideration of systemic racism even when the Common Book is not explicitly about race.
- During UC's next external review, invite external reviewers to observe a safer/brave space conversation in a UC classroom, directly solicit their feedback, and submit their feedback to the UC Diversity Council to further discuss the next steps.
- Present materials, resources, and programming that exposes students to diverse viewpoints.
- Help students learn to become productive citizens and community members by distinguishing between fact-based arguments and opinions to better participate in honest public discourse.

## Expected Outcomes

- A classroom environment better prepared for difficult but necessary conversations on systemic racism, white supremacy, and economic inequality
- A classroom environment where white students are more inclined to acknowledge their white privilege and to use their privilege to advocate for the rights of people of color
- A classroom environment where students of color feel more empowered to speak their minds and advocate for change
- Public recognition of VCU as a university community where such conversations can and do take place
- Enhanced student satisfaction in VCU as a university devoted to promoting social and political change
- Increased recognition of issues directly impacting students and enhanced empathy for communities with which students do not directly identify

## Metrics

- Quantitative and qualitative data from UC-designed student surveys, focus groups, and interviews
- Focused Inquiry and IDS course evaluations, including responses to questions posed specifically on University College's approaches to discussions of inequality and racial justice
- Feedback from UC classroom observations, especially from external reviewers
- Intra- and inter-university recognition of UC's innovative approaches to brave/safer spaces conversations

# Brand Recognition

Goal 1: Establish distinctive identities for University College and its units.

## Strategies

- Create and apply new course prefixes to identify UC units as independent and distinct from UNIV programs outside University College (e.g., IDST, REAL, FCIQ).
- Review and revise mission statements for UC and each of its units.
- Draft clearer and more succinct descriptions of FI and IDS courses.

## Expected Outcomes

- Student expectations of FI and IDS coursework will align better with the mission of UC.
- The IDST course code will help students recognize the IDS Program as a distinct major with its own pedagogical framework
- Current UNIV coursework will be perceived less frequently as generic university programming and student success coursework
- The perception of FI and IDS as distinct programs will improve
- University College will have a greater presence in VCU's general education curriculum, as additional courses under new prefixes (such as IDST) can win approval

## Metrics

- Reduced course drop rates
- Fewer students delaying enrollment in FI courses
- Increased enrollment in IDS courses, including those not required for the major
- # of general education courses from UC
- Student surveys to measure perception

Goal 2: Promote UC's innovative curricula and community outreach accomplishments within the larger Richmond region.

## Strategies

- Recruit students for the IDS program at community colleges through enhanced coordination with those institutions.
- Market regionally to adults with college credit who never finished their degrees.
- Organize events with broad community engagement (e.g., a "Solving Complex Problems Competition" to bring together students from multiple disciplines to solve a complex problem)

## Expected Outcomes

- Increased enrollment in the IDS program
- Increased retention rates in the IDS program
- Increased recognition of UC within the larger Richmond region

## Metrics

- Volume of transfer and readmit inquiries to the IDS program
- Number of IDS majors who have transferred from community colleges with an associates degree
- Participation and attendance rates in UC events and programs
- Coverage of UC community events in local publications (e.g., *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, *Style Weekly*, *RVA Mag*)

Goal 3: Enhance UC's recognition on a national level among other first-year and general education programs.

## Strategies

- Share our work and grow our web presence by enhancing the VCU Writes! website.
- Develop an interdisciplinary scholarship of teaching and learning website.
- Enhance the VCU Common Book program as a resource for other institutions using present and past common books.
- Support UC faculty and administrators in publishing and attending regional and national conferences in general education pedagogy, first-year experience/writing, and interdisciplinary studies.

## Expected Outcomes

- Expressed desire from other gen ed and first-year programs to engage with our approaches
- Greater utilization of UC resources by educators not affiliated with the unit

## Metrics

- Website traffic, file downloads, and active links
- Citations of UC resources in outside educational materials
- Correspondence with outside faculty and units
- Outside adoption of common book assessment tools and models used by VCU
- Presentation and publication records

Goal 4: Increase University College's donor base

## Strategies

- Explore the feasibility/possibility of hiring a development officer.
- Explore the feasibility/possibility of hiring a communications officer.

- Engage in outreach to our alumni, with the assistance of alumni relations.
- Fundraise for scholarship funds.

### Expected Outcomes

- UC will have unit-specific media and other marketing materials to assist with donor solicitations
- Increased scholarship funding available to University College students
- Increased donations to and engagement with the IDS program and University College from IDS alumni
- Increased donations to and engagement with the FI program and University College from VCU alumni who are former UTAs and FI students

### Metrics

- # of publications re: marketing materials
- Website revision or space dedicated to donors
- Website traffic
- # of donors
- \$ amount of donated funds
- # of alumni events
- # of participants at alumni events