Strategic Priority Planning, 2022-2023

May 30, 2023

VCU School of Social Work

Introduction

Dear SSW Community,

Welcome and thank you for your investment in the VCU School of Social Work. If you are reading this, it means you are deeply committed to our mission and how it helps us contribute to improving quality of life. The university strategic plan, **Quest 2028**, outlines the projected course for VCU for the years 2022 to 2028. The implementation for Quest 2028 is outlined through administrative and academic unit strategic plans (**see full details**).

In Fall 2022, the VCU SSW began discussions about how our unit goals align with Quest 2028. These discussions led to the creation of the strategic priorities below. As a member of our community, we thank you for taking the time to review the work we have done on strategic priorities and for giving us feedback as we move forward. The years ahead will offer us many opportunities to engage in strategic planning, to have deeper conversations with our community, and to live into our mission and vision. We are so grateful for our community and the perspectives we know each member will bring as we walk into the future.

Timeline

September 2022: Cabinet groups identify initial goals, strategies and metrics for each theme.

October 2022: Presentation of initial goals, strategies and metrics to the full Cabinet for feedback.

November 2022: Three listening sessions for faculty and staff to provide input on strategic research goals.

January 2023: Presentation and discussion of proposed goals and metrics for all four themes at School Assembly. Additional listening sessions by themed groups held for faculty and staff to provide feedback following Assembly.

February 2023: Presentation to Cabinet of revised and consolidated goals in a report format. Feedback and further revisions by groups.

March 2023: Presentation of revised document in advance of School Assembly for discussion by the body.

March-May 2023: Plan is posted to SSW website for public comment.

April 2023: Plan is shared through alumni newsletter for public comment.
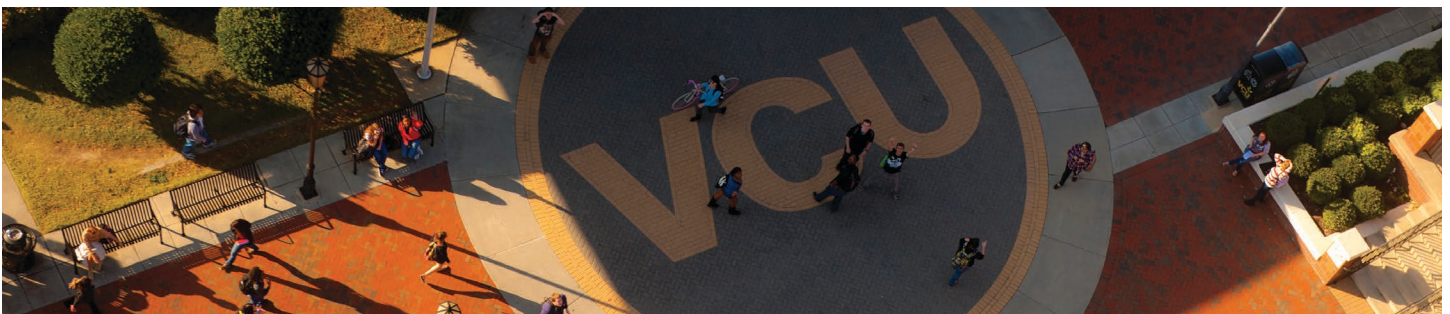
SSW workgroup
- Stevara Haley Clark, Ed.D., M.S.W.
- Kimberly Compton, Ph.D., M.S.W.
- Anna Givens, M.P.A.
- Stephanie G. Odera, Ed.D., M.S.W.

Theme description
Champion diversity, equity and inclusion in all that we do and advance a conscientious drive to support a climate where excellence and success for all people are valued and differences are celebrated.

Guiding question
In what ways can we diffuse this accountability throughout and celebrate the efforts of our whole school?

DDE Goal 1: Nurture an institutional culture and climate that is diverse, inclusive, equitable and engaged.

Strategy: Assess the continuous improvement in culture and climate indices for all units across the enterprise

SSW-specific metric
Each faculty and staff member will contribute to diverse, inclusive and equitable institutional culture and climate by developing a DEI SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) goal for their annual review by August 2023.

Throughout the assessment period, each member of the SSW community will assess their individual achievement of their DEI goal with specific contributions to the improvement of culture and climate in the SSW.

Measures
- How many SSW faculty and staff develop DEI SMART goal
- How many SSW faculty and staff implement DEI SMART goal

DDE Goal 2: Implement an organizational infrastructure to support, sustain and scale DEI initiatives that infuses them into clinical care, curriculum, scholarship and practice.

Strategy: Utilize internal expertise to guide accrediting bodies and national organizations in developing compliance standards and best practices in engaging diverse students and patients.

SSW-specific metric
Provide and fund trainings once a semester focused on anti-racist and anti-oppressive pedagogy and practice by June 2024 to strengthen our faculty and staff organizational capacity to infuse DEI initiatives into curriculum, scholarship, and organizational practice.

Measures
- How many unfunded trainings occur per semester
- How many funded trainings occur per semester
- How many faculty (T&R, Term, CEF) attend each training
- How many staff attend each training opportunity.

Theme 2: Student Success

SSW workgroup
- Sarah Burton-Everette, M.Ed.
- Nicole Lynn Lee, Ph.D., M.S.W.
- Susan O'Shea, CPA, M.Ed.
- Allison Ryals, M.S.W, L.C.S.W.

Theme description
Ignite student success through curricular innovation, a holistic culture of care and an engaged and empowered workforce.

Guiding principles
- Transform curriculum so that all students engage in inquiry, discovery, innovation, experiential learning, civic engagement and creative expression to prepare them for the future of work.
- Enhance the university culture of care and responsiveness supporting student engagement, success and sense of belonging.

SS 1: Transform curriculum so that all students engage in inquiry, discovery, innovation, experiential learning, civic engagement and creative expression to prepare them for the future of work.

Strategy: Deliver high-quality educational opportunities and services that are responsive to the needs of learners (i.e., traditional, nontraditional and lifelong learners) and are attractive and accessible to communities across Virginia and beyond.

SSW-specific metric
Assess course timing and offerings and make changes to be more accessible to students (e.g., time of ground classes, summer ground offerings, etc.)

Measure
- Number of students enrolled and retained in the different or new offerings

SS Goal 2: Enhance the university culture of care and responsiveness supporting student engagement, success and sense of belonging[1].

Strategy: Develop approaches and programs that strengthen student academic, financial, and career planning, readiness and agency.

<u>SSW-specific metrics</u>
1. Use collaborative approach for the early identification of, and intervention with, at-risk students and the development of early intervention plans

Measures
- Number of students performing successfully on performance indicators
- Number of students "tagged" as needing extra supports (upon entry and those retained)
- Number of students retained

2. Increase student engagement/opportunities to engage with faculty.

Measure
- Number of additional opportunities for students to engage with faculty.

3. Review and revise program policies and procedures to reflect a culture that strengthens relationships while holding each other accountable

Measures
- Number of revised policies
- Number of created policies

Note 1 – Quest 2028's third goal for the Student Success theme is: Retain and attract a diverse community of highly qualified faculty and staff that reflects a culture where everyone matters and belongs, and ensure the culture supports career satisfaction and growth.

Theme 3: Research & Innovation to Address Societal Challenges
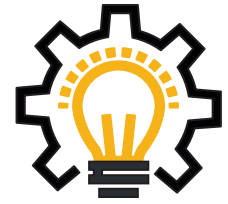
SSW workgroup
- Gary Cuddeback, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.S.W.
- Denise Burnette, Ph.D., M.S., M.S.W.

Theme description
Distinguish VCU as a vibrant public research university where researchers, educators, practitioners and entrepreneurs innovate together to improve lives and address societal challenges.

Guiding principles
Supporting Quest 2028 by establishing an effective research framework and culture and by growing the capacity for research across multiple benchmarks.

RI Goal 1: To develop and sustain research infrastructure and supports that stimulate research, evaluation and scholarship[2]

Strategy: Develop research infrastructure and supports, including:
- Archival of proposal materials
- Creation of database of collaborators
- Editorial support
- Facilitation of internal and external collaborations
- Faculty mentoring
- Faculty onboarding (research)
- IRB support
- Mock proposal review process
- Monthly research seminars
- Research admin support
- Pilot funds
- Post-award support
- Pre-proposal development
- Promotion and tenure preparation
- Proposal submission support
- Stats and methods support

Strategy: Work with Governance & Operations and other SSW stakeholders to develop research/people-friendly policies with the understanding that these are subject to available resources and are ultimately at the discretion of the dean, including:
- Access to internal funds
- Associate-to-full mentoring plan and policies
- Course release and buyout
- Excellence in research awards
- FACR policies
- Fulbright and paid research leave
- Incentives for research, evaluation and scholarship
- Post-tenure research leave/sabbatical
- Pre-tenure research leave (one semester)
- Proposal submission protocols
- Research office/lab space

Strategy: Develop Evaluation Lab (EL) to serve and engage community agencies.
- Student opportunities:
  - Vertical integration of B.S.W., M.S.W., Ph.D. working in teams
  - Integration of EL and M.S.W. research course evaluation requirements
  - Development of certificate programs (e.g., program evaluation, nonprofit management)
  - Experiential learning opportunities
  - Service learning
  - Collaboration with other VCU units and departments
  - AEA paid internships
  - International program evaluation/internship opportunities
- Field opportunities:
  - Engagement with Office of Field Education developing EL field unit
  - Development of new agency partnerships for field placements
  - Servicing the needs of community agencies through EL activities
- Faculty opportunities:
  - Faculty research relationships
  - Scholarship
  - Exploration of incentives to work with EL

RI Goal 2: To advance impactful research, evaluation and scholarship at the SSW[2]

Strategy: Increase number and quality of peer-reviewed publications, scholarly articles and other forms of scholarship by 10% from 2021-2022 output:
- 63 papers published, in press or accepted
- 17 revisions and resubmissions
- 35 additional manuscripts submitted

Strategy: Increase number of presentations at local, state, national and international conferences by 10% from 2021-2022 output:
- 53 presentations
- 29 invited presentations/speaking engagements

Strategy: Increase collaborations with other schools, departments units and research centers across campus.

Strategy: Increase number of research proposals submitted per fiscal year by 15% from 2021-2022 output:
- 34 proposals submitted

Strategy: Increase number of faculty submitting funding proposals by 25% from 2021-2022 output:
- 10 faculty submitted proposals for external funding

Strategy: Increase annual funding from external sponsored awards by 10-15% from 2021-2022 output:
- ~$1M in new funding
- ~$2M total including continuations and subawards

Note 2 – The School of Social Work has adapted Quest 2028 goals. The official goals for the Research and Innovation theme are: 1) Amplify VCU's impact on society through excellence across all disciplines, knowledge creation and transdisciplinary research. 2) Build a collaborative research culture that powers meaningful change and impact and is based on ethics, integrity, inclusive practices, and critical and analytical thinking. 3) Implement a research infrastructure model that is scalable, nimble and ready for growth.

Theme 4: Thriving for All Communities

SSW workgroup
- Geoff LoCicero, M.L.I.S.
- James Romanik, M.B.A.
- Shenita Williams, Ph.D., M.S.W.
- Madison Woodroof, M.S.W.

Theme description
Deliver on our commitment to solving social and health inequities in partnership with communities.

Guiding principles
To align the School of Social Work with Quest 2028 through practical and achievable goals, relying heavily on existing or expanded school and university partnerships, strengths and resources.

TC Goal 1: Develop new programming in the form of a yearly symposium or symposia series[3]

Strategy: Focus on relevant topics to community stakeholders and population, and areas of expertise from faculty, alumni and/or community partners.

Description: This event forum would not be prescriptive and would instead be a space to shop and share ideas and stories; to build on and integrate community voices and perspectives; and to help all parties navigate and connect to appropriate resources, opportunities and knowledge.

Events would be free and open to the community, many of which would ideally be hosted in the community to increase access. Potential locations could include community partner agencies and field placement sites and area K-12 schools, where students could have access and learn more about the social work profession.

Potential topics
- Child and public welfare
- Food insecurity
- Housing instability
- Mental and behavioral health including substance use
- Social determinants of health
- Social and racial justice

Potential planning partners
- Community partners
- NASW-Virginia
- State agencies
- VCU units and disciplines doing related work
- Virginia State University
- Virginia Union University

SSW-specific metrics
Measures
- Participation from key audiences such as community stakeholders and residents; students, faculty and staff; community partners; alumni and donors
- Creation of tangible deliverables for knowledge-sharing such as white papers, reports or presentations
- Development of actionable projects and partnerships in the community resulting from the event and its networking opportunities or from existing collaborations.
- Survey of participants and stakeholders on the impact of the event, its strength and areas for improvement.

TC Goal 2: Community immersion[3]

Strategy: Utilizing existing school and university programs and projects such as Rams in Recovery, Ram Pantry, Community & Learning Gardens and the school's Evaluation Hub (once launched).

Description: The school would define existing initiatives where there is an opportunity to extend programming, events or speaking engagements in the community. The school would leverage faculty expertise, faculty-student or community-engaged research collaborations, and evidence-based research findings with community relevance.

The Evaluation Hub is a microcosm of these possibilities: evaluating and assessing agency work and services that impact clients in the community; developing opportunities for student researchers and/or integrating student field placements; and furthering VCU interdisciplinary collaborations. The school would seek opportunities for Federal Work Study-supported graduate student assistantships to provide support as project liaisons or managers.

SSW-specific metrics
Measures
- Tracking the number of formalized or newly developed partnerships within the School of Social Work or between the SSW and other VCU initiatives.
- Tracking the number of engagement opportunities within the community through these initiatives.
- Tracking the number of new opportunities for student experiential learning.
- Surveying stakeholders on impact, strengths, areas for improvement.
- Future: Developing metrics on the impact and reach of the Evaluation Hub and its impact and reach on agency clientele and populations.

TC Goal 3: All-school community service events[3]

Strategy: Maximize collective power of each individual employee's 16 hours of university-alloted community service each year.

Description: Work with community partners and through other collaborations to plan and promote a monthly, spotlighted service opportunity within the school, while also supporting remote students and employees to do the same in their communities.

This model builds off the school's spirit of service and will require long-term planning and networking. This goal is not focused on public relations and is strictly devoted to serving and supporting partner agencies, their populations and their volunteer needs.

To incentivize and provide visibility, the school could create a system and criteria to track and reward participation through badges and/or stickers for employees. These could be both digital and physical items to use in email signatures, posted to office doors or to use as branded Zoom backgrounds. As tracking systems are available (SLWK 200 and SLWK 230) or could be developed, students could also participate and receive recognition for their service.

SSW-specific metrics
Measures
- Tracking the number of service opportunities developed.
- Tracking the number of employee service hours used; and student service hours where they can be formally documented.
- Tracking the number of badges and stickers earned.
- Surveying satisfaction of agencies served, such as impact of volunteerism by extending reach of service, clients served, etc.

Note 3 – The School of Social Work has adapted Quest 2028 goals. The official goals for the Thriving Communities theme are: 1) Collaborate to build an adaptive infrastructure that meets the evolving needs of VCU and communities. 2) Partner with communities to help inspire authentic gains in health, education and economic prosperity. 3) Create and leverage pathways that demonstrate that our academic and health care goals and innovations benefit and complement the objectives of our community partners. 4) Actively seek community partnerships and opportunities to elevate awareness and collaborative action between VCU and communities.