



**UNIVERSITY OF  
GEORGIA**

**2020 Strategic Plan**

Summative Report of the University Council  
Strategic Planning Committee

## Overview

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The Strategic Planning Committee met on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to complete its evaluation of the University's progress on the priorities set forth in the 2020 Strategic Plan, *Building on Excellence*. The committee's report, submitted here as an information item to the University Council, is the culmination of work throughout the 2018-2019 academic year to review available data and information on the 158 benchmarks established for the 71 strategic priorities in seven strategic directions in the 2020 plan.

Overall, the committee finds that the University has made substantial progress over the last 10 years in each of the seven strategic directions and on many of the specific priorities set within each direction. It is clear that University resources and effort have been effective in working toward priorities of the 2020 plan. Notable examples include:

- The advancement of experiential learning opportunities, new scholarship support, and increased graduation rates for UGA undergraduates;
- Increased endowed scholarships for graduate students and the growth of interdisciplinary and dual degree graduate programs;
- Growth in research expenditures, the number of endowed research chairs, and the number of products UGA researchers bring to market;
- Increases in UGA's statewide economic impact and enhanced communications about UGA's value to Georgia's communities;
- Multiple faculty hiring initiatives and increased support for faculty travel;
- Completion of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Science Learning Center, and the Terry College complex, as well as multiple upgrades to UGA's IT infrastructure; and
- Reduction of UGA's carbon footprint and water usage and the promotion of sustainable design strategies for capital projects.

Notably, the University did not achieve the goals set ten years ago in enhancing diversity across campus, the competitiveness of faculty compensation at all ranks, the competitiveness of graduate assistantship compensation, and the promotion of interdisciplinary research and scholarship. The committee recognizes that focused University efforts continue in these areas.

This report closes out the 2020 planning cycle as the University moves forward in implementing the 2025 Strategic Plan in the coming year. The committee looks forward to working with the University administration to monitor implementation and progress on the new plan.

## **Strategic Direction I: Building on Excellence in Undergraduate Education**

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The committee reports that UGA has made significant progress over the last decade in building on the University's longstanding excellence in undergraduate education. This includes meeting and exceeding many of the specific goals set for the 2020 Strategic Plan, as well as launching a number of initiatives to support and promote undergraduate education.

UGA has maintained high retention rates for full-time first-time freshmen, increasing from 94.5% in 2010 to 95.5% in 2019. Four and 6-year graduation rates for first-time freshmen also increased to 68.7% and 87.1%, respectively. Many campus initiatives flowing from the goals of the 2020 Strategic Plan have contributed to maintaining and improving these impressive numbers. Examples include the Small Class Size Initiative, First-Year Odyssey Seminar Program, and the Experiential Learning requirement.

Another area that has shown tremendous growth in recent years is the support and professional development opportunities available for undergraduate academic advisors. In addition to the existing Certificate in Academic Advising, an Advanced Certificate in Academic Advising was developed and launched in 2017. It provides opportunities for seasoned advisors to explore and reflect on the theories, practices, and perspectives that inform one's advising philosophy and work. In addition, the Academic Advising Coordinating Council created a new subcommittee focused on developing consistent training modules and best practices for new advisors, with a planned rollout in fall 2019.

Another area of pride is the near tripling in institutional scholarship funding available from 2010 to 2019 (\$8,171,827 to \$24,002,272). A focus on increasing scholarships has been at the forefront of the President's priorities since 2017, creating the Georgia Commitment Scholarship Program.

The committee notes that the University has seen a 35 percent increase in the number of undergraduate students studying abroad since 2010, a notable feat during challenging times across the globe, economically and socially.

In addition, the number of students enrolled in online courses has increased from 552 to over 15,000, and the number of credit hours for undergraduate online courses is approaching 50,000, up from 3,952, easily exceeding the expectations of the 2020 plan.

The committee also observed a few areas in which UGA has not met goals set in the 2020 plan. The 6-year graduation rates of transfer sophomores, 81.1% in 2019, continues to lag behind the overall graduation rate; however, the graduation rate for transfer juniors, at 88%, exceeds the overall rate. In addition, although the number of students enrolling in online courses has increased dramatically, the goal of increasing undergraduate students at extended campuses has fallen short with decreasing enrollment. Enrollment has shown a 35% decrease, and there has been a 51% decrease in credit hours at extended campuses since 2010.

## **Strategic Direction II: Enhancing Graduate and Professional Programs**

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The committee reports that UGA has met or exceeded many of the strategic goals in this area ahead of the 2020 deadline.

Notable progress includes enhancing competitiveness for graduate and professional student recruitment by increasing the number of endowed scholarships by 80%, expanding access to UGA graduate programs by increasing the number of programs offered at extended campuses from 23 in 2010 to 48 in 2019, and more than quadrupling the number of online graduate programs from four in 2010 to 17 in 2019. UGA is also beginning to document the research productivity of graduate students by incorporating them into Elements and by tracking a nearly three-fold increase in NSF fellowships earned by UGA graduate students—a total of 30 in 2019.

Progress has also been made in increasing the number of interdisciplinary and dual degree graduate programs, up 120% and 50% respectively, the number of students incorporating international experiences into their programs, up more than 40%, and increasing the number and percent of international graduate students, which also increased by about 40%. These changes all exceeded the goals set for 2020.

Ongoing challenges include the competitiveness of graduate assistantship rates and achieving the 2020 plan's goals to increase the overall number of graduate students and their percent of the total UGA student population. Although the total number of graduate students has risen in recent years (up 6% since 2013), undergraduate enrollment has also increased, so the percentage of graduate students within total enrollment has decreased two percentage points since 2010. The growth of Double Dawgs programs is projected to show positive results in this area. Similarly, although the diversity of the UGA graduate student population has increased only slightly during the period, a number of efforts have been launched that may accelerate progress in the next few years.

### **Strategic Direction III: Investing in Proven and Emerging Areas of Research Excellence**

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The committee reports that, as well-documented elsewhere, UGA has made tremendous progress in recent years in advancing its research productivity. This includes meeting and exceeding many of the specific goals set for the 2020 Strategic Plan, as well as increasing overall research expenditures by more than 40% since fiscal year 2011.

The committee notes that progress on the 2020 plan's priorities for increasing institutional support for research has likely contributed to this overall success. Measures of research support include a 55% increase in the number of Research Chairs (albeit short of the plan's 100% increase goal) supported by a 54% increase in the value of endowments for Chaired Professorships, to \$271 million in fiscal year 2019; a 15% increase in central research and startup support from OVPR and UGARF; and a 52% increase in discretionary state funds allocated in support of research, to a total of more than \$153 million in fiscal year 2019.

UGA has achieved both progress and recognition in the 2020 plan's priorities in technology commercialization and entrepreneurship. With administrative support consolidated in the Innovation Gateway, UGA has seen significant increases in invention disclosures (an average of 169 in 2010 to an average 225 for the three years ending in 2018), a strong record of licensing options that keeps UGA in the top 10 in the country, and a nearly 60% increase in products brought to market—leading the nation with 52 in 2017.

The committee also notes that progress has been made in specific areas of research prioritized by the 2020 plan. These include the successful launch of the College of Engineering, which has met or exceeded the 2020 plan's goals for academic program accreditation, enrollment, faculty growth, and research expenditures. Sponsored research for the College of Public Health has more than doubled the plan's goal for a 50% increase. Sponsored funding from private donors and industry partners have both exceeded goals as well.

The committee observed a number of areas where UGA has not met goals set in the 2020 plan. Although UGA achieved an overall increase of 6.7% in the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty through several successful faculty hiring initiatives, the 2020 plan's goal of a 15% increase may not have been realistic given the impact of the 2008 recession as well as reduction in state funding for higher education over the last decade. Despite good progress in the number of faculty with appointments in two or more academic departments, there is also room for improvement in relation to interdisciplinary grants. Finally, UGA still faces challenges in gaining sponsored funding in Arts and Humanities, which has fluctuated over the course of the 2020 plan.

## **Strategic Direction IV: Serving the Citizens of the State of Georgia and Beyond**

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The committee reports that UGA has continued to make great strides in its public service and outreach goals related to the 2020 Strategic Plan. The priorities and benchmarks of this strategic direction are some of the most wide-ranging of the plan, and it is clear that the University has made this area a priority over the last nine years. Most notable, perhaps, is the dramatic increase in UGA's estimated annual economic impact on the state, which grew as measured from \$4.38 billion per year when first calculated in 2015 to \$6.3 billion per year in 2019, a 44% increase.

A number of the benchmarks put forth in the 2020 plan focus on the improvement of data collection and tools for tracking various aspects of this strategic direction. Significant progress has been made by the Office of Global Engagement in tracking UG's international partnerships, international scholars, and international student mobility, posting interactive dashboards on their website at <https://international.uga.edu/data>.

In addition, it was noted in the 2020 plan that the institution needed better tools to track student internships across campus. For-credit course-based internships are now designated in the Course Approval Process Automation system. Progress in tracking non-credit internships offered through Student Affairs, the Career Center, UGA Libraries, and other units is being led by the Office of Experiential Learning (EL) with the development of the EL transcript for UGA students, which will be able to track designated non-credit opportunities. Also notable is the growth in the number of S-designated service-learning courses offered, which the Committee recognizes is most likely related to the Experiential Learning requirement introduced in 2016. Students are able to fulfill this requirement in a number of ways, one of which is enrolling in a designated service-learning course.

Goals related to increasing programmatic participation in courses and continuing education units for non-credit professional programs have seen a dramatic increase as well. The number of course registrants for online and traditional, non-credit courses has risen to 102,833 in 2018 from 69,088 in 2010.

The committee recognizes that the University has also achieved many of the goals set in 2010 for increasing public and media presence that promotes UGA's service to the state and beyond. The Office of Public Service and Outreach (PSO) publishes a monthly on-line newsletter that highlights ways in which UGA applies research and service to meet the state's evolving economic, social, and community needs (<http://outreach.uga.edu/about/newsletter/>). In addition, UGA Marketing and Communications promotes the University's community engagement, PSO unit outcomes, and PSO collaborations with schools and colleges in impact stories that are routinely in print and electronic media and are frequently used by the administration to communicate UGA's many initiatives and partnerships aimed at improving the daily lives of Georgians.

## **Strategic Direction V: Improving Faculty Recognition, Retention, and Development**

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The committee reports that out the seven strategic directions, faculty recognition, retention, and development seems to be the area in which the University has the most room for improvement. Much of the lack of progress can be attributed to external factors and environments; however, it is noted that there are a few areas in which opportunities for improvement still exist.

While there are many challenges and opportunities left in the area of faculty, some goals have been met or seen significant progress. Since 2010, the level of travel funding allocated by the University to improve faculty scholarship collaboration and visibility has risen by nearly 45%, an increase of \$3 million over the period. In addition, there has been an increase in funding awarded for State of the Art sponsored conferences, rising to \$60,000 in 2019 from \$10,500 in 2010.

Support for faculty research, teaching, and course development has also expanded in the last few years. The Office of Faculty Affairs (OFA) has been investing in faculty development and well-being by offering programs and initiatives that support engagement, workplace satisfaction, and productivity, including a new department head training program, the Aspire Faculty Fellows Program, the Sustainable Writing Practice program, the Summer Faculty Leadership Institute, and the Faculty Learning Series. UGA has also invested in membership in the National Center for Faculty Diversity and Development, which offers a number of online learning opportunities to facilitate faculty success in research and teaching.

Little progress has been made across the benchmarks in faculty salaries as compared to peers over the last nine years. The committee recognizes that four years of no salary increases from the state early in this plan's timeframe has likely contributed to the lack of progress. Recent years of additional funding from the state and 2% raise pools have helped modestly, but the raise pools have been insufficient to compensate for compression of salaries over time.

The recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty continues to be an area of challenge for the University. The committee notes that although UGA has not made progress in this initiative over the last decade, peer institutions seem to be struggling with the same challenges, putting forth similar numbers across the board. Despite the challenge, UGA continues to encourage and support practices that promote diversity. The OFA has established an initiative to train faculty search committees on best practices for recruiting qualified, diverse applicant pools, and to minimize the impact of bias in the screening and selection of candidates. OFA, in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Diversity (OID), has also begun collecting information from under-represented faculty focus groups to better understand how UGA can support the success and retention of these faculty members.

Additionally, OID coordinates faculty recruitment efforts at the Institute on Teaching and Mentoring, a conference hosted by the Southern Regional Education Board Compact for Faculty Diversity, which is the largest gathering of historically underrepresented doctoral scholars in the country. The committee recognizes the work being done by the institution in this area and suggests analyzing the faculty diversity with relation to faculty rank to investigate whether more diversity exists within the junior faculty hired with recent hiring initiatives.

## **Strategic Direction VI: Improving and Maintaining Facilities and Infrastructure**

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The committee reports that UGA has met or exceeded most of the strategic goals in this area ahead of the 2020 deadline.

Notable progress includes the construction or renovation of multiple, state-of-the-art buildings across campus to support the STEM disciplines, including the Veterinary Teaching Hospital (2015), the Science Learning Center (2016), Health Science Campus renovations (2016), ongoing renovations of the College of Engineering spaces on campus, and the in-progress Interdisciplinary STEM Building. In addition, the Business Learning Community completed its third and final phase of completion with the opening of Ivester Hall and Orkin Hall for fall semester 2019. Previous phases were completed in 2015 and 2017. The addition of these structures provides a first-class learning environment for students in the Terry College of Business students and also opens up significant space on north campus to address the needs of other academic units.

Significant progress has also been made in updating and replacing UGA's technology infrastructure across campus. The campus successfully launched a new student information system (Banner) in 2014, a new learning management system (D2L) in 2014, and a new faculty profile system (Elements) in 2015. UGA migrated financial, budgeting, and human resource systems to modern, vendor-supplied platforms in the multi-year OneSource project, which began in 2015 and completed full implementation in 2019. These new systems replaced homegrown and outdated systems. In addition, EITS has worked to significantly increase bandwidth across campus in a number of areas, including high-speed data storage and fiber-optic networks that support research across campus.



## **Strategic Direction VII: Improving Stewardship of Natural Resources and Advancing Campus Sustainability**

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The committee reports that UGA has met many of the goals set forth in this strategic direction, while others remain challenging.

UGA has demonstrated a commitment to reducing the University's carbon emissions, meeting the goal of reducing them by over 20% and making significant progress towards the reduction of energy consumption (23% decrease from 2010) and the purchase of energy from renewable sources (up to 8% from 2010). However, the University has made little progress on its goal of increasing energy generated from renewable sources; the estimated increase is less than 1%, far below the 10% goal. The Committee notes that the University could consider incorporating solar energy sources into the design of all new facilities campus-wide.

The committee recognizes that the University has updated its Guidelines for Design and Construction to incorporate, implement, and monitor current sustainable design strategies. These include a facility performance requirements checklist that has been developed and incorporated into the Supplemental General Requirements & Standards, completing the goal set forth in the 2020 plan.

The committee notes that UGA Food Services has made tremendous strides in reducing waste and water use, including conversion to tray-less dining, which avoids over \$1M in food waste and 150,000 gallons of water annually, as well as composting all organic materials from all campus dining halls since April 2015.

In 2016 UGA sent approximately 300 fewer tons per year to the landfill than in 2007. While positive, the University is not on track to meet the ambitious goal of a 65% reduction by 2020. Changing recycling parameters in Athens-Clarke County have reversed some of the progress and will continue to challenge University goals moving forward. The committee understands that UGA continues to take actions to move campus in the right direction. To enhance knowledge and participation in recycling, a survey was conducted and planning is underway for a coordinated UGA and ACC zero waste campaign. Standardized single-stream recycling bins have been installed in more than 150 buildings at UGA's Athens and the Health Sciences Campus. Efforts are underway to install them in the remaining buildings on campus.