

Planting Our Future

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE





FROM THE DEAN

I COULD NOT BE PROUDER to share the framework of our updated strategic plan — the foundation of the UNC School of Social Work for the next three years. We began this process in August 2022, bringing together collaborative voices across the School to shape the direction of our teaching, research and community engagement efforts with the goal of embracing diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) at the heart of everything we do.

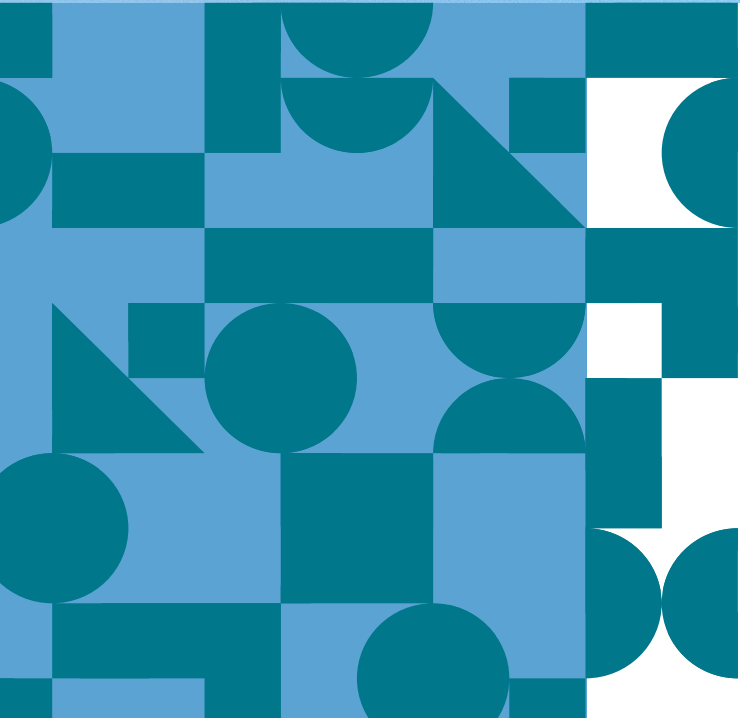


After an initial assessment of the School, we took a bird’s-eye view of our organization to understand what we do well, what we can improve upon, and how we can make a significant impact on the field of social work. Through surveys and feedback events we heard from the stakeholders — the students, faculty, staff, alumni, board members and community partners — who make up the foundation of our School. We listened to their feedback and tasked our strategic leadership team to create a development process to assess how to take their vision for the future of the School and turn it into

realistic goals and actionable deliverables — pillars that will guide the School’s direction over the coming years.

We’re excited to share those priorities and outcomes with you as we cement our strategic plan moving forward. For more than 100 years the UNC School of Social Work has continued to stand as a beacon for the field — for its practitioners and those we serve in North Carolina and beyond. As we renew our commitment to our people and culture, teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and the ways we fund and call attention to these successes, I know that our School is continuing to move in the right direction as a global leader in social work.

I can’t wait to see what we accomplish together as we nurture extraordinary practitioners, partner with eager communities, and implement research discoveries that improve lives and change systems on behalf of individuals, children, families and communities.



OUR MISSION | *Our School has adopted “Advancing equity, transforming systems and improving lives” as our mission. Our students, faculty and staff are committed to understanding the causes of social problems while developing and implementing evidence-informed policies and practices that address those problems. This commitment calls us to serve vulnerable and marginalized populations in North Carolina and around the world.*

OUR VISION | *Our School works to become the leading school of social work for impact — generating knowledge with powerful and positive consequences. We embrace the scholarship of knowing and doing.*

1.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE

2.



TEACHING AND LEARNING

3.



RESEARCH

4.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.



ADVANCEMENT, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

STRATEGIC PLAN PILLARS

Our School’s updated strategic plan focuses on five key areas, or pillars, of distinction. By concentrating our efforts on these areas, we believe our work will make the greatest impact.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE

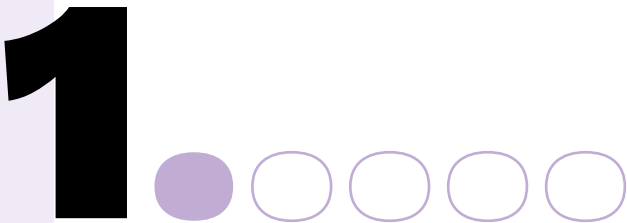
Without a strong understanding of who they are, organizations cannot succeed. That’s why we have put our people and culture at the heart of our updated strategic plan. We know that the students, faculty, staff, alumni and community partners we serve are our most important assets and we plan to continue to put them at the forefront of everything we do.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We will cultivate an anti-racist, anti-oppressive and equitable culture that values all roles and supports the health, safety and well-being of our students, faculty and staff, allowing them to thrive in their school and work environments.

PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- Manifest social work values, as codified by the National Association of Social Workers and clarified by our School community, in all that we do, communicate, practice and prioritize.
- Prioritize the physical and emotional safety of our students, faculty and staff while creating a trusting, flexible environment for growth, well-being and advancement.
- Establish a structured system of transparent, nonlinear, multi-directional communication that emphasizes an affirming and nurturing relationship and responsibility to power.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We will develop diverse, prepared, empowered and engaged social workers who are responsive to individuals, families, communities and systems across North Carolina and around the world.

PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- *Provide evidence-informed, relevant and meaningful instruction, practicum and research experiences to equip students for transformative social work practice and scholarship.*
- *Expand access and flexible program pathways and degree options to increase enrollment and diversify our student body.*
- *Enhance support systems for a diverse student body to ensure successful retention and graduation rates.*

TEACHING AND LEARNING

We are focused on providing world-class educational experiences for our students — whether they are in the classroom or on assignment. Our diverse graduates will be prepared to handle the challenges of social work upon graduating because of the exceptional teaching and learning opportunities provided by the School through our practice, scholarship and supportive degree programs.





Ankur Srivastava, Ph.D., MSW (inset left), is an Assistant Professor and Core Faculty of Global Social Development Innovations. Sheryl Zimmerman, Ph.D. (inset right), is a University Kenan Flagler Bingham Distinguished Professor, the School's associate dean for research and faculty development, and executive director of the Center for Excellence in Assisted Living at UNC.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We will deepen and expand our substantive, methodological and translational areas of research expertise to advance equity, transform systems and improve lives.

PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- Develop, advance and support existing expertise, while strategically recruiting and retaining diverse research faculty to remain at the forefront of innovation, translation and impact.
- Facilitate multidisciplinary research collaborations across research programs, labs, centers and institutes to achieve high impact.
- Expand cross-national research to address real-world social work challenges.
- Translate and communicate our research findings to inform policy and practice to achieve impact across the state, nation and globe.

RESEARCH

Faculty at UNC School of Social Work use advanced research methods to inform, develop and evaluate practice, program and policy interventions to promote social change. They use rigorous methods and novel approaches to find lasting solutions to society’s most challenging issues, while recognizing that communities — the organizations and the people within them — are vital research partners in strengthening the well-being of individuals and families.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We will build mutually beneficial partnerships to co-create and implement community-centered evidence-informed policies and practices that improve the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

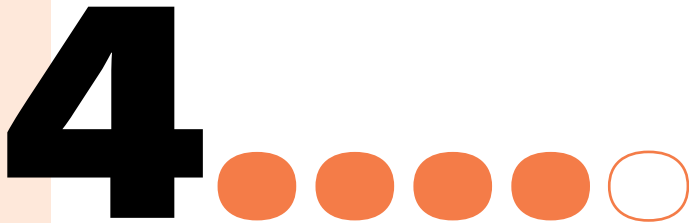


PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- Establish an Office of Community Engagement and Outreach.
- Equitably disseminate co-created knowledge and innovations in research, policy and practice for policymakers, practitioners and community members.
- Establish and pilot test community impact hubs that integrate teaching, research and engagement services.
- Develop strategic global partnerships and engagements that will be the foundation for global research and global social work practice.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Part of being good stewards of the communities we serve is working directly with vulnerable populations to understand the challenges they face. Community engagement is not about coming in with the answer; it’s about working hand in hand with our diverse partners to solve the self-identified problems inhibiting their growth. Our commitment to community engagement will continue to be a driving force for the School.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We will elevate our presence and impact while translating our academic programming, scholarship and research success through robust campus, state, national and global marketing, communications and fundraising strategies.

PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- Build a forward-thinking, achievable strategic communications plan in partnership with leadership teams from each pillar of our updated strategic plan.
- Polish our global and national reputation as a Top 10 R1 school by communicating the importance of social work to societal success and the impact and discoveries of our work on the state, the nation and the globe.
- Build advancement infrastructure that supports our priorities and faculty research.
- Increase endowment to support overall growth and remain competitive with national peers.

ADVANCEMENT, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The amazing things our students, faculty, staff, alumni and community partners achieve illustrate our School’s impact. Making a commitment to advancement, marketing and communications means supporting research, reducing student debt burden, and amplifying the School’s accomplishments. By prioritizing our advancement, marketing and communications efforts, we will continue to attract the best and brightest to our School, ensuring that our influence is felt for years to come.



UNC SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Tate-Turner-Kuralt Building,
325 Pittsboro Street
CB #3550
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27516

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

Dean Ramona Denby-Brinson
Tate-Turner-Kuralt Building,
Suite 303
919-843-9682
rdenby-brinson@unc.edu

OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT

Associate Dean of Advancement
Kandace Davis Farrar
Tate-Turner-Kuralt Building,
Suite 447
919-962-7222
kandace_farrar@unc.edu