

***Framing Our Future:  
Strategic Framing Alignment for the College and  
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences (August 2024)***

**Overview**

With 30 departments and more than a dozen interdisciplinary programs that include the arts, humanities, and STEM fields that encompass the social sciences, the College of Arts and Sciences (the College) has a long history of being a pedagogical and intellectual hub of the University. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) spans 12 College departments with a handful of independent (non-departmentally housed) programs, one of which includes a sizable online program. Close to 500 faculty members serve both our undergraduate and graduate students in high-touch, personalized programs of study designed to instill an ethos of *Pro Humanitate* and lifelong learning.

The mission of the College/GSAS unapologetically embraces the liberal arts tradition within the context of a nationally recognized research university. The College/GSAS upholds the [teacher-scholar ideal](#); expects exceptional teaching and outstanding research, scholarship, and creativity; and promotes faculty interaction with students both in and out of the classroom that nurtures their intellectual and personal development. With dedicated supporting units such as the Office of Academic Advising, the Scholars Office, and First in the Forest, our staff and faculty understand our students as whole persons with a diversity of needs. The key to our value proposition to students is our faculty who collectively embody the teacher-scholar approach to higher education. Access to faculty and close collaboration with them on research, scholarly, and creative work is what sets our students up for a lifetime of making a difference.

With the start of the Academic Year 2023-24, we underwent a major organizational change that brought both the College and GSAS under the direction of one academic dean. While our new configuration brings both challenges and opportunities, our

vision reaffirms the mission of each former unit that when brought together gives rise to something greater than the whole of its parts. Together, the College/GSAS have the opportunity to leverage graduate and undergraduate synergies that add value to an already world-class undergraduate education. Our new structure also promotes closer collaboration across schools as we consider new curricular developments and alignment of resources. Whether within the College or in collaboration with our professional schools, the goal is to provide robust and meaningful graduate education opportunities that support students through top-notch graduate education and enrich the intellectual life of our academic units.

### **Framework Alignment Process**

After the release of [\*Framing Our Future\*](#) in September 2023, academic departments and other units in the College/GSAS began to engage with the thematic goals outlined in the Framework. Working with Department Chairs and the Collegiate Senators, the Office of the Dean of the College planned a full-day, off-site retreat for a broad group of faculty leadership in the College/GSAS that included Associate Deans, some Program Directors and Committee Chairs along with Department Chairs and Collegiate Senators. More than 60 participants attended the event in January 2024, and the retreat was organized around three broad-themed topical sessions gleaned from the Framework and sent in advance to the groups of participants. Our goal was to start engaging in a translation of the themes of the Framework for the context of the College/GSAS and set a course for our next steps. In the time since the retreat, we have had an initial discussion at a College-wide faculty meeting and departments and other units continue their work. The College Committee on the Faculty will be collaborating with ODOC and Collegiate Senators to spearhead the work on faculty workload. While some key steps are just beginning to take shape, many other individual key steps within each of the Thematic Goals are already in various stages of implementation. Of the three themes below, we envision the greatest opportunity for new impact lies in the realms of research, scholarly, and creative activity.

Our three broad themes can be encapsulated in the following questions:

- What is transformational teaching and how can we best support it?
- How can we enhance research, scholarship, and creative endeavors and increase their impact?
- What role do we want graduate education to play in our future?

Within these broad categories, we asked about barriers to our aspirations, whether in terms of policies, time, resources, or other factors; and we talked through the possibilities of how to support these aspirations through alignment with the Strategic Framework. We identified and distilled the main ideas across our broad discussion categories so that we arrived at a set of key ideas to bring forward to the College/GSAS more broadly for consideration and action planning. These ideas are embedded in the key steps outlined below under the set of thematic goals.

### **Thematic Goal 1: Community of Learning**

The College/GSAS will foster a diverse and inclusive learning community focused on equitable access to the resources and opportunities that are hallmarks of a Wake Forest education (*Aim 1.1*).

Key steps:

- Increase support for First in the Forest Office
- In collaboration with the Forest and Faculty Fellows, increase opportunities to introduce intellectual life in residential and recreational spaces
- Assess the Office of Academic Advising and our advising model to ensure we have the capacity to meet the needs of our students with top-notch academic advising and mentoring
- Provide additional funding and other means to support a broader range of and access to mentored research, scholarship, and creative activities for all students
- Address the financial, educational, and belonging needs of our graduate student community
- Increase external funding to support additional opportunities for graduate students
- Identify a set of accelerated (4+1 or 3+2), high value programs where students can earn both a graduate and undergraduate degree in 5 years

The College/GSAS will strategically and systematically promote and support transformational teaching, including experiential learning and interdisciplinary education, which provide critical skills and capacities for solving humanity's problems of today and the future. Our graduates will pursue life paths with meaning where their leadership embodies our motto, "*Pro Humanitate*," no matter what their career direction may be (*Aim 1.2*).

Key steps:

- Identify collaborators across academic units within and outside of the College/GSAS
- Increase and strategically organize faculty development for inclusive excellence in teaching and mentoring
- Align systems of evaluation and reward to support transformational teaching including supporting faculty innovation in teaching and mentoring by promoting and rewarding risk-taking
- Highlight and reward the role of teaching professionals as high contributors to pedagogical innovation and excellence
- Support the efforts of interdisciplinary units like Wake the Arts, Entrepreneurship, and Environment and Sustainability
- Take an active role in the development of a center for experiential learning
- Address physical space needs as a means to build community and opportunities for transformational educational experiences
- Analyze and optimize the role of graduate instructors in our educational mission
- Facilitate community connections for experiential learning opportunities
- Explore and identify key opportunities and collaborations for College/GSAS presence in Charlotte

### **Thematic Goal 2: Community of Inquiry**

Enhance the quality and impact of our research, scholarly, and creative endeavors through an inclusive community of inquiry that provides mentored opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students (*Aim 2.1*).

Key steps:

- Engage with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to increase pre- and post-award support for those seeking external funding in all academic fields
- Reduce base teaching load for research active tenure track faculty to a 2/2 load including opportunities for course stacking with a system for periodic reevaluation
- Create opportunities for interdisciplinary collaborations within and outside of the College/GSAS and Wake Forest University

- Account for and reward the range of teaching and mentoring that occurs outside of the traditional classroom
- Expand what "counts" as research, scholarship, and creative activity (e.g. applied, community-based, etc.)
- Increase support for visiting scholars and artists to be part of our community
- Promote broader dissemination of research findings
- Use external data to identify colleagues who would be strong nominees for national and international awards in their field
- Develop strategic communications and platform for showcasing research, scholarly, and creative work

Support alignment with new signature areas of excellence in research, scholarship, and creative work with partnerships across schools; and develop processes for the creation and support of additional new areas of excellence (*Aim 2.2*).

Key steps:

- Convene interdisciplinary groups connected to signature areas of excellence to ensure robust College/GSAS participation in discussions that span schools
- Align College/GSAS hiring priorities to support signature and adjacent areas of excellence
- Identify means for additional seed funding for collaborative, interdisciplinary projects that align with signature areas of excellence or that hold the potential to develop into a new signature area of excellence
- Provide robust faculty development around grant-seeking
- Use data as well as opportunities for community-building to identify existing and potential areas of strength for investment with an eye toward cross-school collaboration
- Develop a strategic hire initiative to attract national and international talent in key areas
- Play a key role in developing and supporting true joint hires across schools

Amplify Wake Forest's scholarly excellence through external partnerships, whether to extend the reach of our work or to engage in collaborative partnerships to produce scholarly and creative work (*Aim 2.3*).

Key steps:

- Identify existing key relationships and provide additional support
- Develop a structure to promote and sustain scholarly and creative community collaborations
- Leverage relationships with the Medical School, the School of Professional Studies, and the School of Business, including potential relationships in Charlotte as well as Winston-Salem and surrounding areas
- Strengthen relationships with Law and Divinity and their external partners for truly transformative public-facing work on the environment and sustainability

### **Thematic Goal 3: Community of Partnerships**

Develop a strategic approach to community partnerships grounded in mutuality and reciprocity using methods of co-creation (*Aim 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3*).

Key steps:

- Inventory current community partnerships across all units in collaboration with the Office of Civic and Community Engagement
- Create opportunities for professional development in methods of community-based and participatory partnerships
- Leverage the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for support for co-writing grant applications with community partners
- Expand what "counts" as research, scholarship, and creative activity such that applied and community-based work are valued
- Coordinate with University-level infrastructure and professional schools to develop community partnerships
- Identify partners in higher education, non-profits, and industry to support economic development in the region and the state

### **Thematic Goal 4: Organizational Excellence and Continuous Improvement**

The steps below are needed to support the three thematic goals in alignment with the Strategic Framework. This work is important in its own right and is crucial to accomplishing the College/GSAS alignment with Framing the Future. Toward that end, we must create and embrace a culture of continuous improvement that encourages experimentation and new ideas. The first three areas of focus for organizational excellence elaborated upon below are: faculty workload; processes and procedures;

and communications strategy. To the extent that many of these steps are faculty-focused, our teacher-scholar model means that this support and development accrue to the benefit of our students as well.

Develop a strategic approach to faculty workload and equity (*Aim 4.1*).

Key steps:

- Use data to assess faculty workload and develop planning processes for Department Chairs to work with their departments to move toward 2/2 teaching loads for research active tenure-track faculty
- Identify methods to account for service responsibilities and tools to aid Department Chairs in promoting more equitable sharing in the service workload
- Engage with teaching professional faculty to identify opportunities for professional development and provide release time for special projects
- Refine regular and systematic salary merit and equity processes

Develop processes and procedures to support clarity and equity within the College/GSAS (*Aim 4.2*).

Key steps:

- Engage with the Associate Provost for Faculty to develop a system of joint appointments to support the kind of work needed to effect our goals
- Systematize faculty leadership appointments (e.g. Directors, Chairs, Associate Deans) and provide greater professional development for those roles
- Provide additional direction from ODOC to departments in key areas such as faculty search, promotion and tenure, and use of resources

Increase communications capacity to boost visibility, reputation, and opportunities for collaboration (*Aim 4.3*).

Key steps:

- Add communications staff and create an organizational structure to build out communications strategy across the College/GSAS

- Launch a College/GSAS publication focused on research, scholarship, and creative activity of our faculty, including the work they accomplish with undergraduate and graduate students
- Leverage opportunities through Communications and External Relations for faculty to engage in public-facing promotion of their work

While many of the initiatives outlined in this alignment document speak to activities that are at first glance faculty facing, in a teacher-scholar model some of the smartest investments of resources we can make for our students are necessarily an investment in our faculty. Students' learning experiences at Wake Forest hinge on the excellence of both the "teacher" and the "scholar" in order to provide a world class liberal arts education for a lifetime of making a difference.