



**VCU** School of Business

**OPPORTUNITY 2030:**

# **UN**LIMITED OPPORTUNITY CREATION





“ Opportunity 2030 is our roadmap for becoming not just focused, but truly better, different and special—in how we serve our students, partner with our communities and shape the future of business education. ”

— Brian P. Brown, Ph.D., Dean and Professor





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# Executive Summary



The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business has successfully completed an ambitious planning initiative, **Opportunity 2030**, anchored by our core vision: **Unlimited Opportunity Creation**. This plan, spanning from 2025 to 2030, establishes a thriving and inclusive community, empowering students, faculty, staff, alumni and our business and community partners to not only identify but also create meaningful opportunities across their professional and personal journeys.

Opportunity 2030 emphasizes four interconnected strategic energies that reflect our foundational strengths as an urban, R1 business school and respond to an evolving higher education landscape:

**Prospect Exposure:** We will excel at helping prospective students and stakeholders perceive and pursue opportunities presented by the School of Business.

**Student Experience:** We will foster an engaging and supportive environment that provides students with the resources, opportunities and incentives necessary to develop real-world skills that prepare them for success in business.

**Research Excellence:** We will advance business knowledge and practice through transdisciplinary research and collaborative partnerships to make meaningful change.

**Community Engagement:** We will provide access to ongoing educational opportunities and build meaningful connections among alumni, business partners and our community to positively contribute to a thriving global economy.

This comprehensive strategy was shaped by robust analysis, extensive stakeholder feedback and a clear understanding of evolving higher education dynamics. It addresses critical challenges, such as increased competition and shifting demographics, while capitalizing on our strengths in accessibility, innovation, excellence and community integration.

As we transition from planning to implementation, Opportunity 2030 positions the School of Business to be recognized as a leading business school—uniquely equipped to empower our stakeholders, particularly students, to generate unlimited opportunities throughout their careers and within their communities.

**Brian P. Brown, Ph.D.**

Dean and Professor, VCU School of Business

# Why Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is essential—not merely to chart a course but to shape our collective vision of the future. At the School of Business, our unique position within an urban environment and our standing as a public R1 research institution empower us to leverage distinctive advantages through our new strategic plan: **Opportunity 2030**. This initiative reaffirms our commitment to **Unlimited Opportunity Creation**, designed to benefit every stakeholder—students, faculty, staff, alumni, business partners and the broader community.

## Comprehensive and Collaborative Process

Our planning process was comprehensive and inclusive. It began in Phase 1 with external research led by Brand Federation. Their approach included market analysis and deep stakeholder engagement through interviews, surveys and focus groups. These insights provided the essential building blocks for our strategic direction—including our vision and mission.

In Phase 2, we brought the process in-house, tapping into the deep knowledge and enthusiasm of our internal community. More than 70 colleagues self-nominated for participation, with more than 50 actively contributing across dedicated workgroups focused on key areas. Additionally, recognizing the importance of a supportive workplace, we established an affinity group focused on enhancing our **Cultural Environment**.

Led by 15 exceptional co-leads, these groups refined actionable goals—ensuring the plan reflects the aspirations and diverse needs of our community.

## Strategic Architecture

Opportunity 2030 is structured around two foundational pillars: **Student Success**, which equips students with the skills and experiences necessary for lifelong achievement; and **Transdisciplinary Research**, which emphasizes conducting impactful research that spans traditional academic boundaries and directly benefits society.

These pillars are operationalized through four targeted Energies:

- **Prospect Exposure:** Enhancing outreach and expanding access to business education.
- **Student Experience:** Delivering comprehensive, real-world skill development.
- **Research Excellence:** Advancing meaningful, transdisciplinary thought leadership.
- **Community Engagement:** Strengthening connections across students, alumni, business partners and the community.

Aligned with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International and VCU's Quest 2028 priorities, this structure ensures targeted actions and measurable outcomes.

## Meeting Today's Challenges, Shaping Tomorrow's Opportunities

Opportunity 2030 arrives at a pivotal moment marked by shifting demographics, rising educational costs, intensified competition and evolving technological and academic paradigms. By embracing strategic planning, we proactively navigate these complex challenges, positioning ourselves not merely to adapt but to excel.

Our intentional approach reinforces a key principle: **Access alone isn't enough**. Measurable outcomes are essential. By investing our collective resources strategically, we close our preparation gaps, support breakthrough research and reinforce the networks that build lifelong opportunity.

## Our Shared Commitment

This plan is more than a roadmap. It's a shared commitment to cultivate an environment where opportunity is intentionally created, nurtured and grown. Through Opportunity 2030, we position the School of Business as a lasting catalyst for **Unlimited Opportunity Creation**.

**Mayoor Mohan, Ph.D.**

Interim Associate Dean for Strategic Affairs and Professor, VCU School of Business



# Process Overview

May 2024

**Mandate and kickoff**

June 2024

**Research and working groups**

July 2024

**Synthesis and working groups**

August 2024

**Feedback and working groups**

September 2024

**Iterations, working groups and provost “red flag” review**

October 2024

**Stakeholder presentations and feedback**

November 2024

**Phase 1 complete**

December 2024

**Phase 2 begins with self-nominations for energy workgroups**

January 2025

**Energy workgroup rosters finalized**

February 2025

**Energy workgroups refine objectives and goals and conduct stakeholder research**

March 2025

**Energy workgroups refine actions and conduct schoolwide town halls**

April 2025

**Energy workgroups submit final deliverables**

May 2025

**Strategic plan development complete**





# PRIMARY INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS

“ Opportunity 2030 brings our strengths, resources and aspirations into focus. It positions us to unlock unlimited opportunities and achieve lasting impact—and for this, credit goes to our colleagues for their wisdom, dedication and strategic vision. ”

— Mayoor Mohan, Ph.D.  
Interim Associate Dean, Strategic Affairs and Research Initiatives  
and Professor



# Our Research Methodology and Inputs



Strategic plans often miss the mark by relying too heavily on internal priorities. We took a broader approach. Drawing on national market research, brand perception studies and conversations with students, faculty, alumni and employers, we set out to understand where we needed to go next—and just as importantly, how to get there.

What informed our thinking:

- **Background material review:** Previous strategic plans, research reports and publications
- **Landscape analysis:** Data from Statista, Pew Research Center, Gallup and the Graduate Management Admission Council
- **Individual interviews:** 21 key stakeholders, including alumni, donors, students and others
- **Focus groups:** Three groups—alumni, hiring managers and educators
- **Research from the Office of Student Engagement (OSE):** Focus group findings and course evaluation survey analysis
- **Task force workshops:** Three working sessions with committee members
- **Faculty and staff surveys:** More than 250 responses collected
- **Energy town halls:** Faculty and staff workgroups presented goals and action items for each strategic energy
- **Ongoing community feedback and input**

## INSIGHT 1 | **A Wave of Change**

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### **A declining population equates to increased competition.**

Birth rates are declining and are likely to continue. The U.S. birth rate dropped from 16.7 to 11 per 1,000 people from 1990 to 2021 (Statista/NCHS, 2023).

A smaller student market will create more competition among higher education institutions.

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### **Rising costs equate to questions about value.**

Increased financial commitment is casting more and more doubts on potential students. Seventy-three percent of respondents in the 2024 Faculty and Staff Survey selected “increasing costs of education” as one of the trends that have the most impact on business schools today.

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### **Different modalities of learning are changing the competitive landscape.**

In the 2024 Faculty and Staff Survey, more than half cited “emerging technologies that impact how people teach and learn” and “increased demand for faster, more efficient alternatives to a traditional higher education degree” as the trends with the most impact on business schools today.

## INSIGHT 2 | **The Access Eclipse**

### **VCU is known for equity in access.**

“We’ve just carved out a really neat niche, I think, with this international sort of more diverse population. I love this—it does differentiate us in a lot of ways.”

— Individual interview, board member

### **The VCU School of Business excels in meeting students where they are.**

“My mother went to VCU and VCU treated her well as a nontraditional student. There was flexibility in the approach. There was respect for somebody trying to change careers with family.”

— Individual interview, 2024

### **There is pride surrounding the school’s heritage in serving the underserved.**

“We found it interesting that the School of Business has its origins in Richmond Professional Institute, which was predominantly a women’s institution. That was really interesting because our origins were educating a population that was underserved in that time period, which is pretty cool.”

— Task force workshop, 2024

### **But... strong equity in one area can overshadow other aspects of the brand.**

Seventy-nine percent believe that “accessible” accurately describes the VCU School of Business—by far the word with the largest distinction used to describe the school.

Only 24 percent of respondents agree with the following statement: “The VCU School of Business is unique in terms of the educational offering they provide.”

— Faculty and Staff Survey, 2024

### **Too many believe the School of Business falls short in other critical areas.**

The current reputation of the VCU School of Business in areas perceived to be critical for a leading business school is low, including “quality of teaching” and “quality of faculty.”

Only 1 percent of respondents rated the VCU School of Business as very strong when asked about its “reputation as a leading business school today.”

— Faculty and Staff Survey, 2024



## INSIGHT 3 | **Leaning Into Innovation**

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**Adaptability, creativity and innovation are in the school's DNA.**

"What I really value and I really encourage them to hold onto is this sense of always growing, always looking for new ways to do things. We've done that really quickly and really well."

— Individual interview, 2024

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**Stakeholders want the school to hone these attributes further.**

Strengths the school needs to improve, as described in the task force workshop:

- Better "flexibility in modalities"
- "More nimble and adaptive"
- "Greater emphasis on new course structures/formats; curriculum and course offerings driven by our strategic partners"

In a Movement Mapping exercise, stakeholders wanted the school to be 114 percent more innovative, as opposed to conventional, in the future.

## INSIGHT 4 | **The Power of Connection**

**The School of Business is made strong by the connections it serves.**

When asked about the qualities significant to the VCU School of Business or its future success, task force members highlighted the importance of internal faculty and staff relationships:

- “The relationships we build”
- “Greater sense of belonging among staff”
- “Create intentional long-lasting relationships with VCU”

**Connections within the student body and between faculty and students are highlighted differentiators.**

“Students are willing to help each other here. It’s not cutthroat or too competitive... It’s nice that everyone’s here to help each other out.”

— Transfer student, OSE focus group

“I’ve always felt like my professional goals were at the forefront of professors’ minds, which I really value.”

— OSE focus group

**The proximity to a thriving business community provides ongoing opportunity for connection.**

“One thing I hope will never change are those business panels that OSE sponsors with the RVA business professionals.”

— OSE focus group

## INSIGHT 5 | **Student Success**

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**The School's strengths can be leveraged to better define the value of our students' education and experience.**

"I've been communicating very clearly here that we need to educate the entrepreneurs of the future, make sure there is significant diversity in what the entrepreneurs of the future look like."

— Individual interview, VCU leadership

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**Where gaps in student preparation exist, the school must be intentional about closing them.**

"I'll get resumes that are two pages long, fonts all over the place and not measured-up correctly."

— Hiring manager focus group

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**The proximity to a thriving business community provides ongoing opportunity for connection.**

"If we fulfill our purpose, students will be more marketable, poised for life success and engaged for life with the university as an institution and as a brand." "[If we fulfill our purpose] Students will be more prepared, experienced, more competitive in the market and prepared to take on their future careers."

— Task force workshop members





# OUR “WHY”

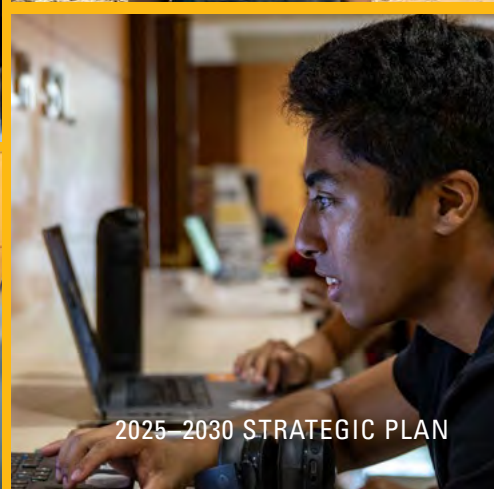
“ Our commitment to access and opportunity doesn’t just open doors to education—it builds bridges to career success, ensuring that every student, regardless of their starting point, has the tools, support and networks to thrive. ”

— Jana McQuaid, Ed.D.  
Associate Dean, Academic Programs and Student Success





# UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITY CREATION







## Our Common Beliefs



We know business  
is transdisciplinary.



We believe in access  
to opportunity.



We support the  
whole student.  
For their whole life.



Opportunity creation  
is contagious.



We're building a community of opportunity.



# Our Common Beliefs



## **We know business is transdisciplinary.**

Business is not a field; it's a series of disciplines that bring success to every field. Our research and teaching intersect with a broad range of industries.

## **We believe in access to opportunity.**

It's not just about diversity; it's about opportunity. It's about giving people access to a room that many didn't even know existed.

## **We support the whole student. For their whole life.**

Providing the knowledge, skills and experiences to fully prepare students by reaching them earlier and strengthening lifelong learning and connections.

## **Opportunity creation is contagious.**

Our students create opportunities for themselves, the businesses they work for and the communities where they live.

## **We're building a community of opportunity.**

We're focused on building not just a school but a connected community that brings together committed students, dedicated faculty, engaged alumni, adjacent departments, local businesses and the forward-thinking supporters who make it all possible.



## Our Common Purpose

- Unlimited Aspirations
- Opportunity Accessed
- Creation of Value



# Our Common Purpose



## Unlimited Aspirations

A business education is the key to the halls of accomplishment across every field of endeavor. It can help anyone with the drive to succeed to create opportunities for themselves, the businesses they work for and the communities where they live.

**Together we can** remove the barriers to high-quality business education and give access to every individual with the aptitude and drive to achieve and succeed.

## Opportunity Accessed

The VCU School of Business has a proven record of making access to a business education more accessible, making real-world learning more real, making opportunity creation more creative and establishing connections between faculty and students that are more connected.

**Together we can** apply our creativity, ingenuity and resourcefulness to make sure everyone has the opportunity to achieve success in their career and life.

## Creation of Value

We have the opportunity to remove the limits for anyone who has the talent and drive to achieve, to create opportunities, pathways and programs so that students are supported and successful, and to continue to innovate on the research, curriculum and programs in service to the whole student before, during and after they leave our halls.

**Together we can** create a school, culture, curriculum, programs and extracurricular learning opportunities that are informed by transdisciplinary research and that benefit the whole student before, during and after they leave our halls.





## 2025–2030 STRATEGIC PLAN



# Unlimited Opportunity Creation



## Our Vision

We envision a world where life-changing access to business education is available to all, leading to the creation of world-changing opportunities for all.



## Our Mission

The mission of the VCU School of Business is to catalyze opportunity creation for our students, our faculty and staff and the organizations and communities they serve.





## Our Guiding Pillars

### Student Success

By focusing on the whole student experience—before, during and after they leave our programs—we can create more access and opportunity. Further, we can foster deeper connections to alumni and the organizations that will be major contributing members to our learning, teaching and research model.

### Transdisciplinary Research

"Transdisciplinary Research" goes beyond traditional academic boundaries by involving not only multiple academic disciplines but also external stakeholders like industry, government and community partners. This approach addresses complex problems in a holistic way, with the potential to create outcomes that impact both academia and broader society.





## Our Energies

We will focus our energy in four key areas.

### Prospect Exposure

We will excel at helping students see and seize opportunities in a business career.

### Student Experience

We will provide real-world skill-building and development with a focus on preparing the whole student for success in business.

### Research Excellence

We will conduct research that identifies impactful new opportunities, focusing on the intersection of business and adjacent fields.

### Community Engagement

We will build an effective on-ramp to a business career, providing access to ongoing educational opportunities and building lifelong connections among alumni.





# OUR GOALS

“ Education creates opportunity. I am proud of our faculty and staff who work alongside students to turn that opportunity into lasting impact—one student, one relationship at a time. ”

— Carol Scotese  
Interim Associate Dean, Academic and Faculty Affairs





## ENERGY 1

# Prospect Exposure

## OBJECTIVE

**We will excel at helping prospective students and stakeholders perceive and pursue opportunities presented by the VCU School of Business.**

## ENERGY 1: PROSPECT EXPOSURE

## GOAL 1

**Identify target markets to prioritize sustainable and strategic enrollment and talent pipelines.**

By identifying target markets, the School of Business can better understand who valuable prospective stakeholders are, learn more about those stakeholders' preferences, needs and wants and provide customized and efficient marketing messages to influence perceptions and actions to engage with the School of Business. This goal informs the subsequent goals of the Prospect Exposure energy.

## ACTIONS

- Use enrollment data to identify top feeder high schools, community colleges and employers that send students to VCU.
- Assess student demand for different course formats, including online, and identify where we can be most competitive.
- Work with partners to reach new audiences—such as military-affiliated, adult, international and out-of-state students.
- Cultivate relationships that foster and attract prospective employee talent.

## GOAL 2

**Listen to prospect needs, interests and career goals to inform programming.**

The School of Business can put forth appealing opportunities by simply listening to the target markets' needs, interests and career goals, and react accordingly with programming options. The School of Business should pursue pathways that transition targeted interested students and talent from prospective to active participants, with intent to achieve each individual's career end goals.

## ACTIONS

- Expand events and one-on-one meetings to tailor recruitment messages to prospective students' interests and goals.
- Structure some programs as manageable, stackable units that let students build skills and value before completing a full degree.
- Determine what learners want in content, format and credentials to guide flexible, career-ready programs.
- Explore synergies with other academic units for programming opportunities.



## ENERGY 1: PROSPECT EXPOSURE

## GOAL 3

**Acknowledge and find ways to overcome prospect barriers to entry.**

Certain obstacles can prevent prospective students, talent and stakeholders from seeing and acting on the School of Business' opportunities. By identifying, acknowledging and providing solutions to overcome barriers, we can pave the way for more positive perceptions and, ultimately, more quality applicants to join the School of Business community.

**ACTIONS**

- Work directly with all students, including adult learners, military-affiliated students and first-generation students, to understand and reduce enrollment barriers.
- Recognize the cost of attendance by sharing financial resources early—and helping students understand the long-term value of their degree.
- Provide clear guidance on how to prepare and submit applications through workshops, open houses and instructional videos.

## GOAL 4

**Develop and disseminate messaging that promotes the opportunities offered by the VCU School of Business.**

Promotion with strong branding and targeted messaging will be key to our objective of influencing perceptions and motivating prospective individuals to join the VCU School of Business community.

**ACTIONS**

- Measure brand awareness and perception to inform marketing strategy.
- Launch a brand campaign that reflects the School of Business' strengths, aligns with strategic goals and brings the community to life.
- Create engaging social content that features voices from across our community.
- Strengthen outreach to local high schools, community colleges and employers through in-person visits and relationship-building.
- Invest in consistent branding across School of Business programs and prioritize efforts with the greatest potential impact.

## ENERGY 1: PROSPECT EXPOSURE

## GOAL 5

**Create a technology-supported and data-focused culture that drives sustained prospect exposure activities and supports target market stakeholders in making education-related choices.**

Data collection, management, synthesis and dissemination are key to successful implementation and achievement of the prospect exposure energy's overarching objective. Being more informed helps to reduce uncertainties when investing resources and making decisions regarding which markets to target, what programming will attract and sign on prospects, how to reduce perceptions of entry barriers and what communication will resonate.

## ACTIONS

- Track key indicators tied to enrollment and market position—and regularly share useful, comparable data with faculty and staff. Designate a point person to manage this data.
- Use tools like chatbots, videos and web content to help prospective students—and their families—learn about our programs, how college works and ways to pay for it.



ENERGY 2

# Student Experience

OBJECTIVE

**We will foster an engaging and supportive environment that provides students with the resources, opportunities and incentives necessary to develop real-world skills that prepare them for success in business.**



## ENERGY 2: STUDENT EXPERIENCE

## GOAL 1

**Integrate experiential learning opportunities into every academic program to enhance student engagement, global awareness and practical business application.**

Experiential learning opportunities are critical to develop real-world skills that prepare our students for success in business.

## ACTIONS

- Track which students have internships, with the long-term goal of ensuring every student gains career-relevant experience.
- Incentivize faculty to integrate industry-based projects into required courses, in collaboration with local businesses.
- Offer and support subject-specific study abroad opportunities and encourage collaborative online learning with international partners.
- Incentivize and increase student and faculty/staff participation in business student organizations and leadership opportunities.

## GOAL 2

**Work to ensure that all students receive thorough and relevant instruction from a motivated faculty striving for learning excellence.**

This goal signals that teaching and learning excellence is a priority and enhances faculty engagement and use of best pedagogical practices.

## ACTIONS

- Establish clear expectations, guidelines and policies for teaching and learning excellence across all course modalities.
- Create a teaching and learning resource center to share best practices and support instructional innovation.
- Promote curriculum innovation to keep pace with changes in business, technology and education.
- Ensure students have regular opportunities to meet with faculty for support, guidance and one-on-one conversations.

## ENERGY 2: STUDENT EXPERIENCE

## GOAL 3

**Assess and create opportunities for students to develop professional skills in and outside of the classroom that will serve them as students and professionals.**

This goal provides students with opportunities to develop business professional skills.

## ACTIONS

- Establish a baseline of career readiness skills and ensure the curriculum supports all students meeting the baseline.
- Develop annual, department-led events that focus on industry-specific career paths.
- Support and promote proven career development programs like the Mentoring Program and Professional Development Fund.

## GOAL 4

**Foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment that provides students the support they need to be successful and strengthens students' sense of belonging and engagement within the School of Business**

Incentivizes student, faculty and staff engagement to build a sense of belonging in the School and provides individualized resources to support a successful business career.

## ACTIONS

- Implement a user-friendly system to track attendance at school events—and motivate participation from students, faculty and staff.
- Host more faculty-student events that create inclusive, welcoming spaces.
- Strengthen School of Business support services—including academic advising, tutoring, career services and mentoring—while improving collaboration with university-wide resources.
- Develop academic success programs to help meet students where they are in terms of core skills (e.g., reading comprehension, writing, math, Excel).
- Promote inclusive, high-visibility events that build community and celebrate our diversity.
- Boost online engagement by spotlighting student voices and their achievements.



ENERGY 3

# Research Excellence

OBJECTIVE

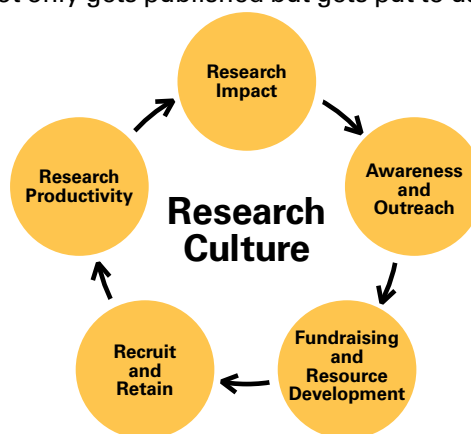
**We will advance business knowledge and practice through transdisciplinary research and collaborative partnerships to make meaningful change.**



## Our Commitment to Research

Now is the time to take our university to the next level. Faculty, students and staff all play a role in making research matter. By embracing collaboration, engaging beyond academia and committing to impact-driven scholarship, we can transform the way business schools contribute to the world—ensuring that our work not only gets published but gets put to use.

We will accomplish our overarching objective through five interrelated goals that include (1) research productivity, (2) research impact, (3) awareness and outreach, (4) fundraising and resource development and (5) recruit and retain. Progress on these goals will incrementally shift the School of Business into a robust and thriving research culture that drives ongoing research excellence.



## Overarching Actions

- Support the establishment of an Office of Research, led by the associate dean for research, to serve as a hub for promoting and advancing research-related endeavors.
- Establish a Research Excellence Committee to serve in an advisory capacity to the associate dean for research and support efforts to promote research excellence across the school.

## ENERGY 3: RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

## GOAL 1

**Enhance research quality and output through increasing faculty, staff and student involvement in research activities.**

Increasing the research productivity of faculty, staff and students is a necessary endeavor to generate impactful research.

## ACTIONS

- Build a comprehensive knowledge management system to track research activity—including publications, grant funding and faculty expertise.
- Offer research-related professional development programs (e.g., grant writing workshops, research seminars, formal mentorship program, writing retreats).
- Provide research grants for data collection, software and conference travel.
- Evaluate and revise annual research productivity reviews and create personalized development plans.
- Institute a recovery pathway for faculty whose research activity has been dormant.
- Explore ways to improve the faculty experience with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process.

## GOAL 2

**Disseminate our research to advance knowledge and influence policy, practice and people.**

We will accomplish this by creating unique research opportunities that can enhance our internal and external visibility and further cultivate relationships.

## ACTIONS

- Form research partnerships with businesses and alumni-led companies to enhance real-world applications and address institutional goals.
- Integrate research into education and student success through strategic initiatives (e.g., Every RAM's a Researcher, School of Business convergence labs, research track for M.B.A. program—rewarded by funding or credit) and incentivize faculty and staff to work with student researchers.
- Create research clusters for signature research areas where VCU can lead globally.
- Establish faculty fellowships where researchers spend time working directly with companies.
- Strengthen the Ph.D. program through targeted initiatives.

## ENERGY 3: RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

## GOAL 3

**Enhance the visibility of our research and cultivate relationships across VCU, alumni, the business community and the public at large.**

Enhancing our visibility to scholars, businesses and organizations increases our opportunities to fundraise and develop research resources.

**ACTIONS**

- Develop a comprehensive research communication plan for both internal and external audiences.
- Incentivize and support faculty who secure highly visible roles in professional academies and societies (e.g., editorships at A\*/A journals, officer roles in academia, conference organizers).
- Organize a series of annual research-driven events that bring together academics, industry leaders and alumni (e.g., VCU Business Research Summit, Research Speaker Series).

## GOAL 4

**Generate funds and resources targeted at enhancing our research mission.**

Obtaining funding for our research enhances our ability to conduct and disseminate impactful research and to appropriately incentivize high-performing researchers to join or remain at VCU.

**ACTIONS**

- Secure endowments for professorships and to support strategic research initiatives (e.g., summer grants, small research grants).
- Develop pathways for business-funded research.
- Expand the School's capacity to support successful faculty grant applications.



## ENERGY 3: RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

## GOAL 5

**Recruit and retain high-performing research faculty, staff and Ph.D. students.**

A motivated, engaged and persistent group of scholars is imperative to build momentum and continuity to our research excellence goals.

**ACTIONS**

- Revise roles, rewards, promotion and tenure policies to align with research excellence goals.
- Use the annual culture survey to assess job satisfaction factors of research-active faculty, staff and Ph.D. students.
- Assess and revise sponsored research activities (e.g., Dean's seminars, outside social activities, opportunities to share in 5-minute bursts).
- Create a Research Excellence Fund to recognize consistently exceptional scholarship—through funding, reduced course loads or other forms of support.
- Acknowledge effort and/or provide meaningful incentives for developing and submitting significant grants.
- Intentionally market VCU, Richmond and Virginia during job searches and Ph.D. student recruiting.



## ENERGY 4

# Community Engagement

## OBJECTIVE

**We will provide access to ongoing educational opportunities and build meaningful connections among alumni, business partners and our community to positively contribute to a thriving global economy.**

## ENERGY 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## COMMUNITY DEFINED

Any individual or organization that invests in the school's ecosystem, amplifies impact and creates opportunities for all stakeholders to thrive.

## GOAL 1

**Center community engagement in the DNA of the School of Business.**

By embedding community engagement into the core culture of the School of Business, we ensure our educational efforts remain aligned with evolving community needs, driving targeted contributions to the global economy and fostering enduring connections between alumni, partners and stakeholders.

## ACTIONS

- Engage in the community to ensure we're focused on solving the right problems.
- Build a culture of community engagement through opportunities and connections.

## GOAL 2

**Empower students to become impact-oriented leaders who drive positive change to build thriving communities.**

Empowering students through real-world experiences and strategic partnerships aligns directly with our objective by preparing impact-oriented leaders who can translate classroom knowledge into meaningful, community-driven outcomes, further strengthening our role in building thriving communities.

## ACTIONS

- Integrate contemporary, real-world cases and dilemmas into coursework to address ethical reasoning and decision-making skills.
- Host an annual student competition to design and pitch solutions that drive positive change in our communities—drawing on proven frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Establish formal partnerships with businesses, nonprofits and government agencies to offer paid or credit-bearing opportunities.



## ENERGY 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## GOAL 3

**Nurture meaningful relationships with alumni to support the mission of the School and build our reputation.**

Strengthening alumni relationships enhances our community connections, leveraging alumni as key contributors and ambassadors who can amplify our mission, enrich educational opportunities and expand our global reputation.

**ACTIONS**

- Collect data on alumni locations, careers and interests to better connect with and support them.
- Create meaningful touchpoints with our alumni to grow overall engagement in time, talent and/or treasure.
- Empower alumni to be effective ambassadors for the School of Business by creating a social media toolkit for alumni.

## GOAL 4

**Engage our community partners in opportunities for meaningful connection.**

Engaging community partners through structured collaboration and shared knowledge ensures mutual benefit, sustaining meaningful connections that reinforce our position as an impactful contributor to local and global communities while enhancing educational relevance and student experiences.

**ACTIONS**

- Appoint community champions for each department or center to help build connections and serve on the Community Engagement Council.
- Embrace a knowledge management system to track and process community engagement.
- Host a Community Day in Snead Hall (or a road show) where departments and centers create usable offerings for the community.



# FUTURE FORWARD

“ We are grateful that every day we get to see the impact of the generosity of our alumni, donors and community partners, and that their investments in our school truly do create life-changing opportunities. ”

— Alexandra Moore (M.S. '09)  
Executive Director of Development

# Our Commitment to Culture

In developing Opportunity 2030, we recognized that the success of our vision depends not only on goals and initiatives—but on the strength of our culture. To support that foundation, we launched the Cultural Environment Affinity Group, a long-term initiative to build a supportive, inclusive environment for faculty, staff, students and the broader community.

Unlike other workgroups, the Cultural Environment Affinity Group has a distinct and ongoing purpose: to define and nurture the values, behaviors and programs that reflect our community's shared principles. Aligned with the theme of Unlimited Opportunity Creation, this initiative ensures our culture evolves thoughtfully and inclusively.

Through an annual cohort model, we invite ongoing dialogue and continuous improvement. Participants shape both immediate enhancements and long-term strategies—creating a workplace where all members of our community can thrive and contribute meaningfully to our shared mission.



# AI and the Business Landscape

As artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes business and society, the School of Business will harness AI to drive innovation in both teaching and scholarship.

Faculty will be encouraged and supported to integrate AI as a pedagogical tool and as a topic of critical inquiry, ensuring students graduate with a deep understanding of the technology and its business, ethical and societal implications. Classroom adoption will be faculty-led, allowing instructors to tailor AI applications to their courses and teaching philosophies.

In research, AI's capacity to organize, analyze and synthesize large datasets—as well as power advanced modeling and predictive analytics—will accelerate discovery across business disciplines. The school will support faculty and doctoral students in deploying AI technologies to enhance thought leadership and advance research across the business disciplines.

# Business and Societal Impact

The School of Business is committed to advancing societal well-being through initiatives integrated across its core missions of scholarship, teaching and external engagement.

Our emphasis on transdisciplinary research drives discoveries that benefit a broad spectrum of society. Through teaching, we strive to prepare students to become ethical, inclusive and socially responsible leaders. We aim to direct our outreach efforts toward building meaningful partnerships with community and professional organizations to address pressing economic and social challenges.

To maximize our impact, we will adopt a strategic, mission-aligned focus that channels faculty expertise and resources into a coordinated portfolio of initiatives. This deliberate alignment of actions across our core missions will amplify a cohesive cluster of activities for greater societal impact.

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