# Strategic Planning in Tumultuous Times

3 December 2025

# Panelists

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Associate Provost and
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Hood College
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Vice Provost and
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# Agenda

- **Introductions & Workshop Overview**
- **Speaker #1 – Setting Graduate College Priorities**
  - **Small Group Breakouts #1 & Report Out**
- **Speaker #2 - Strategic Planning at a Time of Uncertainty**
  - **Small Group Breakouts #2 & Report Out**
- **Speaker #3 - Strategic leadership during times of transition**
  - **Small Group Breakouts #2 & Report Out**
- **Q&A**

# Workshop Outcomes

1. **Assess the effectiveness of your institution's strategic planning efforts and identify opportunities to strengthen goals amid uncertainty.**

2. **Clarify your role within graduate education and pinpoint areas for improving graduate-college operations.**

3. **Apply current enrollment-planning strategies to address institutional expectations and emerging challenges.**

4. **Use adaptable leadership approaches to provide direction, adjust priorities, and support teams during rapid change.**

## 3.3 Organization & Leadership | Strategic Planning

- GPSPS leaders articulate a vision and mission, as well as set goals and objectives based on the needs of populations served, intended student learning outcomes and program outcomes.
- GPSPS leaders facilitate continuous development, implementation, and assessment of effectiveness and goal attainment congruent with institutional mission and strategic plans.
- GPSPS leaders promote environments that provide meaningful opportunities for student learning, development, and engagement.
- GPSPS leaders develop, adapt, and improve programs and services for populations served and institutional priorities.
- GPSPS leaders include diverse perspectives to inform decision making.

# Strategic Planning Basics

Scott Lanyon, Ph.D.

Vice Provost and

Dean of Graduate & Professional Education

University of Minnesota

# *University of Minnesota*



**Carnegie Classification: R1**
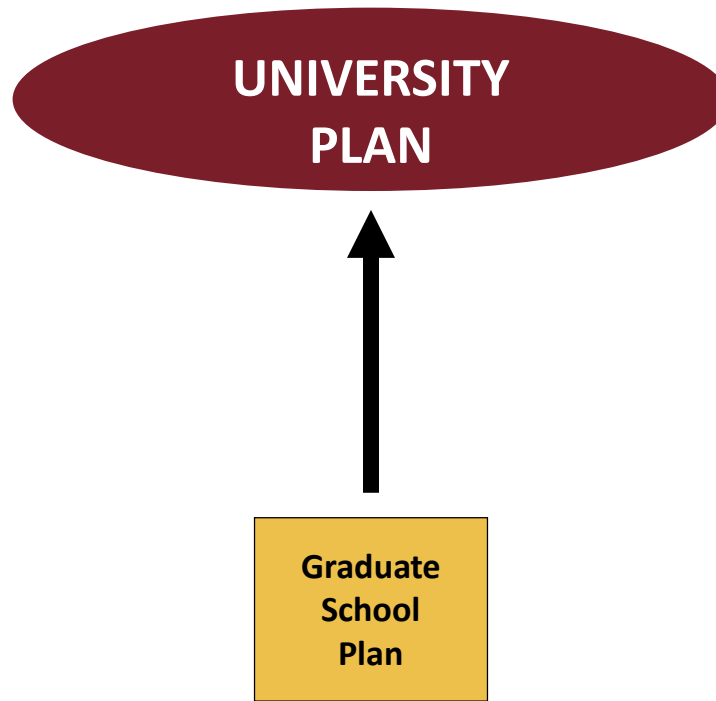
**5 - Campuses (3 with Grad/Prof)**

**42,212 - Undergraduate Students**
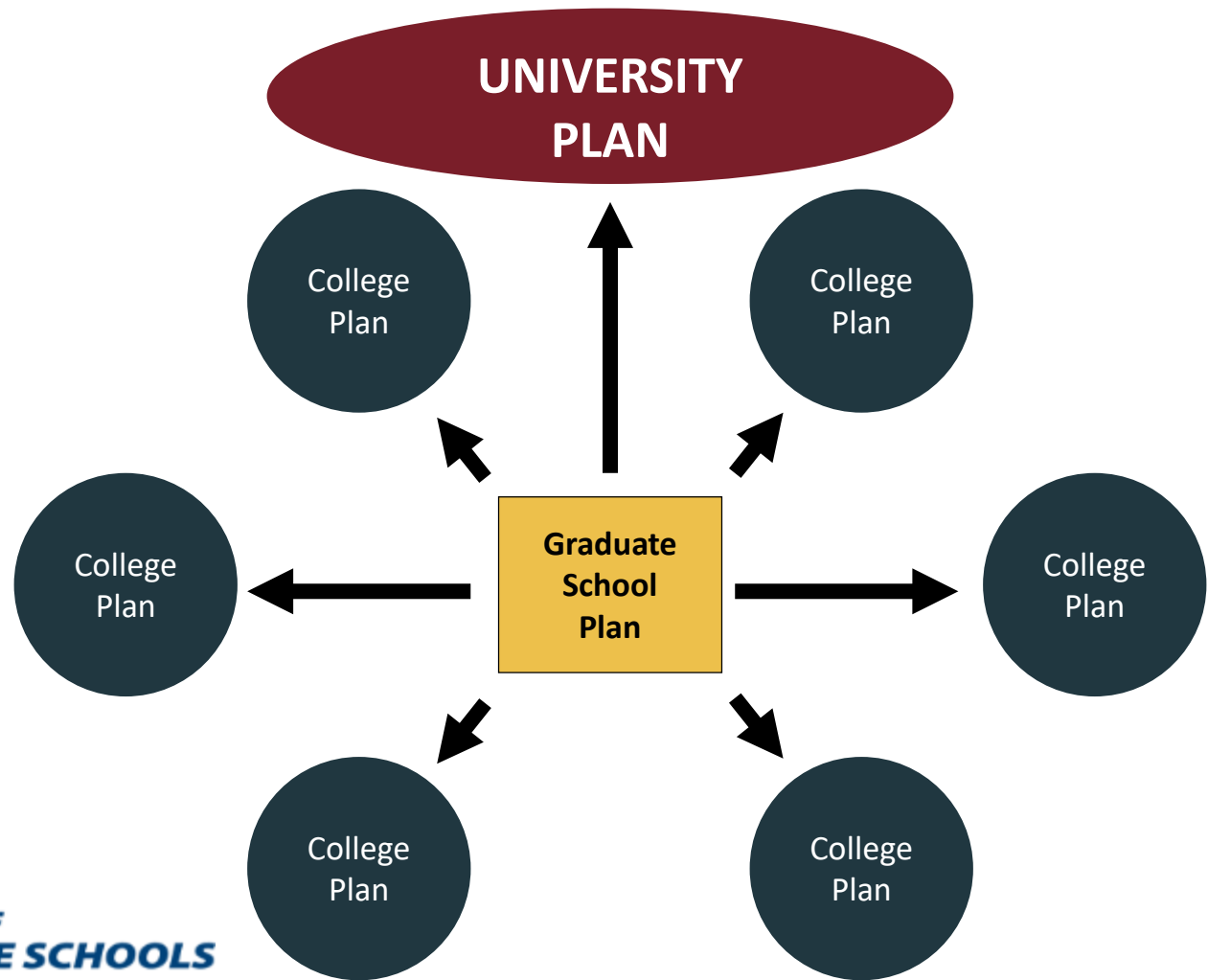
**16,780 - Graduate/Professional Students**

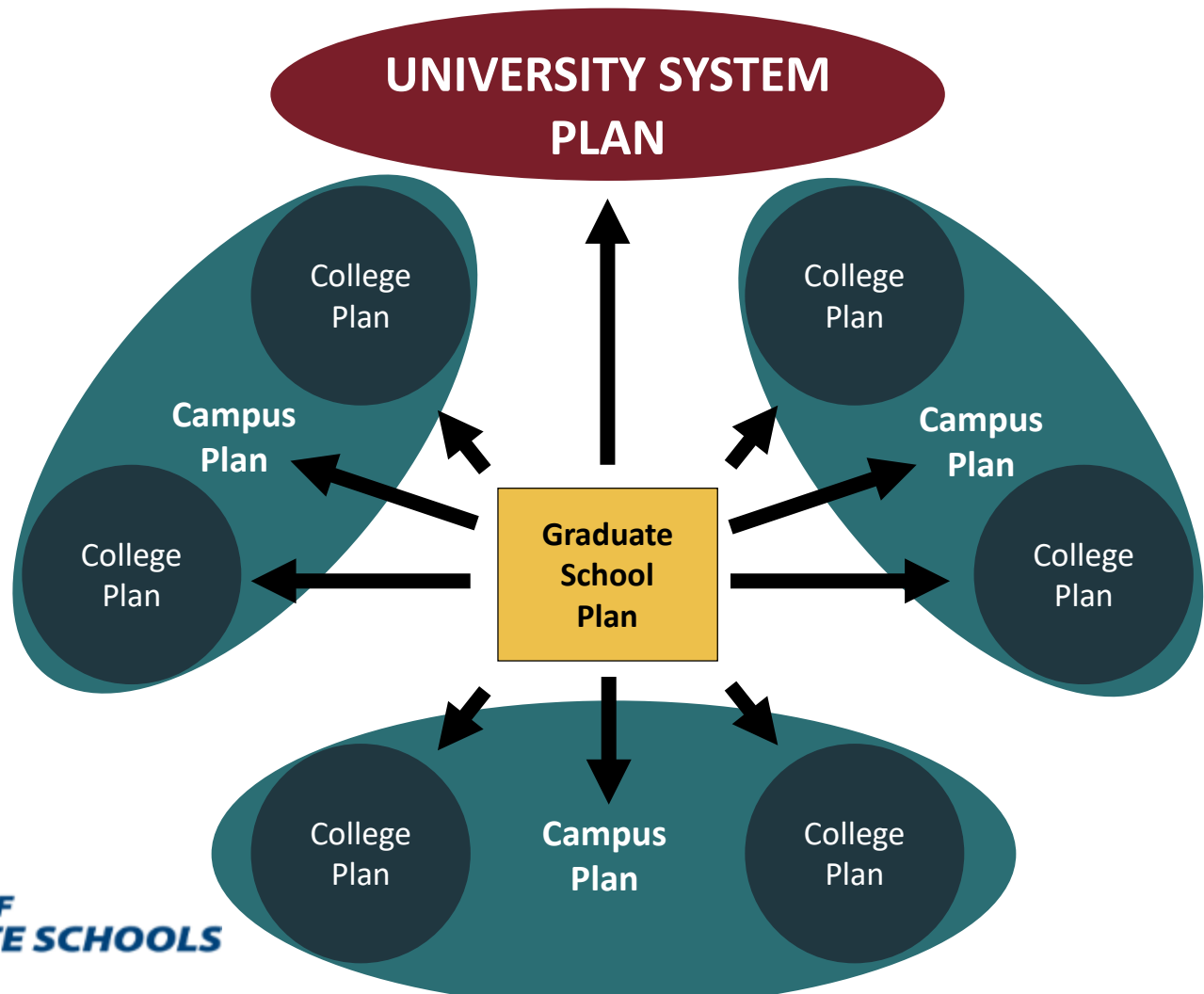**800 - Postdoctoral Scholars**

**27 - Graduate School Staff FTEs**
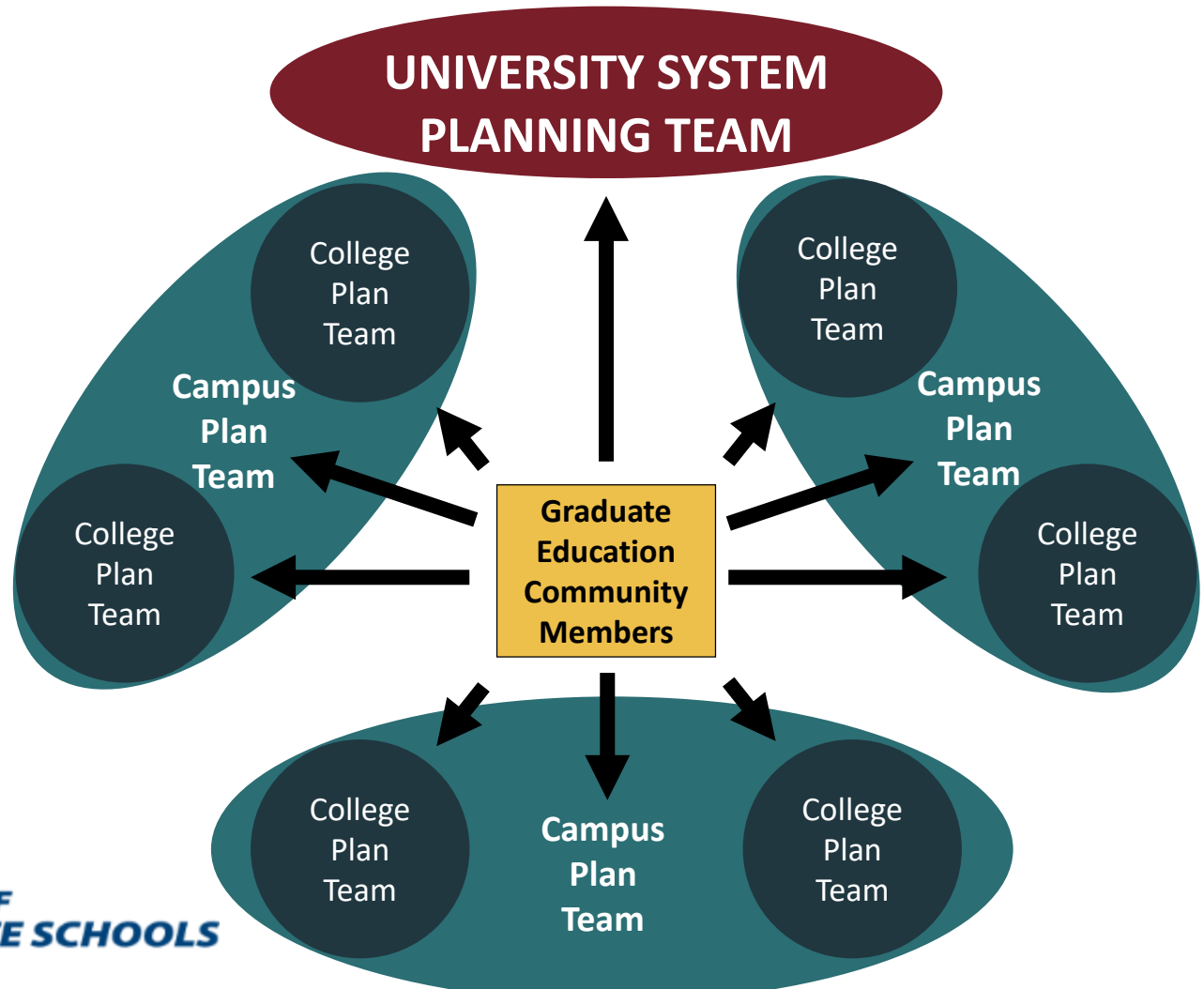
**STRATEGIC PLANNING TIMELINE**

University Strategic Plan

Graduate School Strategic Plan

# GRADUATE SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANNING: QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE BEGINNING

1. What are the President and Provost's personal goals and motivations?
2. What resources will be available for implementation of the strategic plan?
3. Do you want to work with a facilitator and, if so, who will that be?
4. What are your strategic planning goals?
   a. What questions do you want answered?
   b. What goals and action steps do you expect to be included?

5. What is the climate in the Graduate School regarding "Strategic Planning"

6. Should a CGS Consultation be done before planning begins to inform the plan's goals?

**CGS** COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS

# GRADUATE SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANNING:
## Things to keep in mind during the process

1. Who are your constituents on campus and how/when best to involve them?
2. Who are your partners on campus and how/when best to involve them?
3. Are you on track to accomplish your pre-determined strategic planning goals?
4. Are any of your staff and/or key partners disengaged from the process?

5. Are there any new developments that suggest changes to your strategic planning process and/or goals?


COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS

# GRADUATE SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANNING:
## Things to consider after planning is concluded

- Would a CGS Strategic Consultation be helpful in determining how to implement certain aspects of the plan?
- How can you use your professional network of Graduate Education colleagues (think CGS) to help you develop a plan for implementation?
- How will you keep the plan front and center for Grad School staff?
- How will you celebrate strategic plan successes?
- How will you refresh the plan as actions are accomplished or need to be updated?
- When is it time to do another round of strategic planning?

**CGS** COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS

# BREAKOUT #1

**Share with your table your strategic-planning phase:**

1.  Introduce yourself and state where are you in the strategic planning process (not started, underway, completed within the last two years, or plan is over two years old):
    a.  If not started, is the uncertainty in higher education today a barrier to starting?
    b.  If underway, how might the goals be modified to accommodate uncertainty?
    c.  If recently completed, how do these tumultuous times affect implementation?
    d.  If plan is >2yrs old, is it still helpful given all the changes or is it time to redo?

2.  How successful have you been in mapping your plan to other strategic plans in your institution?

# Enrollment Planning in the Present Moment

April M. Boulton, Ph.D.

Associate Provost and

Dean of the Graduate School

Hood College

# *Hood College*



www.hood.edu

**Carnegie Classification: R3**

**~1,400 - Undergraduate Students**

**~1,000 - Graduate/Professional Students**

**Robust GA/TA Workforce**

**6 FTE Grad Staff, plus ~50 mixed faculty**

**Frederick, MD** (~40 mi from BOTH Baltimore & DC)

# A Strategic Enrollment Plan

- Do *not* wait for the request
- Do engage your faculty directors (and school deans)
- Do time your plan with the institutional planning cycle
- Do align your goals directly to the institutional strategic plan and budgetary strengths

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# THE GRADUATE SCHOOL AT XXX: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Graduate School was established in XX, nearly 100 years after…INSERT RELEVANT BACKGROUND HERE…

The Graduate School serves an important role in expanding the academic profile of the institution, supporting and responding to ever-changing needs in the regional professional workforce, and providing an important revenue stream for the XXX. INSERT MORE FACTOIDS ON HOW CRITICALLY IMPORTANT THE GRAD SCHOOL IS WITHIN YOUR UNIVERSITY MATRIX

## UNIVERSITY MISSION

INSERT

## THE GRADUATE SCHOOL MISSION

INSERT

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC GRADUATE-ENROLLMENT PLAN

In developing this plan, we drew from several, reliable data sources to help inform where we are and where we hope grow. The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the National Association for Graduate Admission Professionals (NAGAP) are the two premier organizations dedicated to the advancement of graduate education in the U.S. Their resources are cited below and included in several appendices. Other publications are also referenced, and we utilized the aforementioned data sources to provide helpful context to their conclusions regarding forecasts for graduate education.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

For the next strategic plan, we are projecting XXX,XXX credits in FY 20XX.

SET THE STAGE FOR THE DETAILED PRIORITIES TO FOLLOW—ARE YOU PLANNING TO GROW MODESTLY, AGGRESSIVELY OR MAINTAIN CURRENT NUMBERS?

***TOP PRIORITIES***
*ADD IN-DEMAND DEGREES…*

*REDUCE THE NUMBER OF UNDER-PERFORMING PROGRAMS*
*Sunset under-performing programs that consistently require course cancellations due to low enrollment and/or with a five-year negative trend line that outweighs total credits.*
INSERT A BASIC STRATEGY FOR CLOSING PROGRAMS IF APPLICABLE…
CITE GOVERNANCE/POLICY STRUCTURES SHOULD PROGRAM CLOSURES IMPACT TENURDED FACULTY LINES.

*ENHANCE TARGETED MARKETING*
HOW?

# XXX UNIVERSITY DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN
# 2022-20XX

## INSERT THE DRAFT GOALS OF THE LARGER UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN AND HIGHLIGHT EVERY GOAL THAT RELATES DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

# METRICS

*The following metrics will be achieved by the conclusion of this strategic plan. Progress will be monitored throughout the year and reported annually.*

| Metric | University Strategic Goal Alignment | Current Or Baseline | FY 26 Goal | FY 27 Goal | FY 28 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Retention Metric | | | | | |
| Wellness Metric | | | | | |
| Enrollment Goal #1 | | | | | |
| Enrollment Goal #2 | | | | | |
| Enrollment Goal #3 | | | | | |
| Enrollment Goal #4 | | | | | |
| Enrollment Goal #5 | | | | | |
| Enrollment Goal #6 | | | | | |
| Total Graduate Enrollment | | | | | |

# APPENDICES

## NATIONAL DATA

The below list corresponds to the order in which resources are presented in this appendix:
1) Recent articles on graduate enrollment with summaries
2) Clearinghouse data
3) Council of Graduate Schools data

## INTERNAL DATA

The below list corresponds to the order in which resources are presented in this appendix:
1) Graduate enrollment at XXX UNIVERSITY FROM 20XX  - 20XX
2) Cite particular program trends that highlight a success or demonstrate a concerning trend
3) Program cluster trends

# BREAKOUT #2

**Discuss with your table enrollment planning in the present moment:**

1. What is your institutional expectation for graduate enrollment (maintain, grow, etc.)?

2. What other functional areas does your graduate division support?

3. How are you navigating current challenges (e.g., F1 losses, loan caps, grant access) in your enrollment planning?

# Strategic Leadership During Times of Transition

Dana A. Williams, Ph.D.

Dean of the Graduate School

Howard University

# Howard University



**Carnegie Classification: R1**

**Profile - HBCU**

**- 11,519: Undergraduate Students**

**- 3,371: Graduate/Professional Students**

**- 50 U.S. states and 61 countries**

**- 14 - Graduate School Staff FTEs**

# Enacting strategic leadership during times of transition

Consider these three questions and the "standard" responses to them. Then, offer supplements, course corrections, additional points of consideration for the responses. Feel free to use experiential examples.

1. How can strategic leaders offer direction and focus even when full information or stable plans are lacking?

2. What approaches for adapting quickly, reassessing priorities, and empowering teams during rapidly changing conditions might leaders use?

3. What anchors should serve as the strategic compass when formal plans are disrupted or insufficient?

# How can strategic leaders offer direction and focus even when full information or stable plans are lacking?

- Articulate a small set of non-negotiable priorities;

- Communicate them with clarity and consistency;

- Acknowledge uncertainty honestly while still naming the next right actions that can be taken;

- Resist waiting for perfect information;

- Create momentum through iterative decision-making—setting short horizons, testing assumptions, and adjusting course as new insights emerge; and

- Project steadiness without pretending to have all the answers.

What approaches for adapting quickly, reassessing priorities, and empowering teams during rapidly changing conditions might leaders use?

- Frequent but meaningful check-ins that encourage morale,
- "Rapid" feedback loops to avoid inertia and paralysis;
- Short decision cycles to stay responsive;
- Team models that distribute authority;
- Use of and trust for frontline expertise;
- Encouragement of experimentation within clear boundaries;
- Real-time data use (to assess priorities, for scenario planning, and for reflective debriefs that surface what is working and what needs to shift); and
- Flexibility modeling.

# What anchors should serve as the strategic compass when formal plans are disrupted or insufficient?

## Standard

- Mission;

- core values;

- institutional purpose;

- and long-range aspirations.

These elements provide coherence and moral clarity when circumstances are chaotic. They guide decision-making, shape trade-offs, and ensure that rapid adaptation does not dilute identity or impact. Mission and values—held consistently and communicated often—become the steady compass that keeps the organization oriented toward what ultimately matters.

## More aggressive

- Institutional narrative: *Who are we, and what is our evolving narrative?*

- Community obligations: *What do the communities we serve need from us now?*

- Talent and strengths mapping: *What are our strengths that can anchor us, no matter what?*

- Learning agenda: *How can we use structured learning to "discover," understand, or test what's next?*

- Clarifying Constraints: *How can we use clear constraints to sharpen priorities and prevent drift?*

- The horizon line: *What do we need to stabilize now; and what do we need to position us where we want to be 3 years from now?*

# BREAKOUT #3

**Explore with your table strategic leadership during times of transition:**

1. How can strategic leaders offer direction and focus even when full information or stable plans are lacking?

2. What approaches for adapting quickly, reassessing priorities, and empowering teams during rapidly changing conditions might leaders use?

3. What anchors should serve as the strategic compass when formal plans are disrupted or insufficient?

# THANK YOU!
## *Questions?*

GRADUATE SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover®

# STRATEGIC PLAN
# 2020–2025

## MISSION

To facilitate and advocate for excellence in graduate education and postdoctoral training.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### DIVERSITY

**Increase the diversity of students receiving graduate degrees & postdoctoral training**

Diversity in all forms leads to the evolution of scholarship and knowledge. The Graduate School promotes a vibrant student body and a welcoming campus climate in order to accelerate the diversity of thought, varied career paths, and cross-disciplinary dialogue that contribute to a quality education and the strength of our discoveries.

### SERVICE

**Provide consistently exceptional service to graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, graduate programs, colleges and campuses**

First and foremost, the Graduate School is a service organization. We provide our constituents with the critical information, support, tools, training and resources they need in order to help them make better decisions and achieve greater success.

### ADVOCACY

**Advocate for, recognize, support and reward excellence in graduate education & postdoctoral training**

Recognition and reward are key motivators for graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, programs and colleges. As an impartial administrative unit, the Graduate School identifies exemplary achievements in order to promote excellence in graduate education and postdoctoral training.

### BEST PRACTICES

**Increase innovation of best practices in graduate education & postdoctoral training**

Graduate education, like any other enterprise, must continually adapt and change in order to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world. By researching, sharing and promoting innovative best practices in graduate and postdoctoral training programs, we will better prepare our graduate students and postdoctoral scholars for what lies ahead.

# NEW STRATEGIC INITIATIVES*

## DIVERSITY

» Work with colleges and campuses to **build inclusive communities** for graduate students and postdocs from under-represented populations *in order to* improve scholarly depth and excellence in our graduate programs and increase recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. 4.1.2; 4.2.1

» Create the University of Minnesota System **Graduate Diversity Conference and Fair** *in order to* increase recruitment of UMN undergrads to pursue graduate degrees within the system. 4.1.1

## SERVICE

» Develop **online professional development resources** *in order to* provide opportunities to all graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. 2.1.3

» **Develop a menu of University of Minnesota professional development opportunities** and assign digital badges as appropriate *in order to* make graduate students and postdocs aware of these opportunities and to make it easy to communicate the nature of each opportunity. 2.1.3

» **Develop a database of graduate and postdoc alumni**, with their employment information, and their contact information *in order to* publicize career outcomes for each graduate program and to facilitate surveys of alumni to inform graduate program design. 1.3.3; 2.1.3

## ADVOCACY

» Address concerns regarding **differential benefits received by Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Fellows** *in order to* avoid punishing individuals for being successful at securing fellowships. 4.2.2

» Promote efforts to **prevent harassment/abuse** of graduate students and postdocs *in order to* improve their University of Minnesota experience. 4.2.1

» Encourage departments to **include graduate and postdoc advising quality** as a criterion in 7-12 statements and in annual review and promotion *in order to* reward faculty who are contributing positively to graduate education and postdoctoral training. 4.2.2

» Promote efforts to **diversify the University faculty** *in order to* improve the University's ability to attract and graduate an increasingly diverse community of graduate students and postdocs. 4.1.1; 4.1.2

» **Promote "pipeline" initiatives** such as the Meyerhoff Scholars Program *in order to* increase recruitment of students from under-represented communities. 4.1.1

» Promote efforts to **reduce/eliminate barriers to working across units** *in order to* increase graduate student and postdoc participation in interdisciplinary scholarship. 2.2.3

» Establish an **Annual Graduate Education Celebration** *in order to* raise the visibility of the central role of graduate education at the University. 4.2.2

## BEST PRACTICES

» Partner with colleges and campuses to **provide training** to faculty advisors and Directors of Graduate Studies *in order to* improve faculty effectiveness as advisors. 4.1.2; 4.2.1; 4.2.3

» Collect information about the **impact of Graduate Education Goals** *in order to* encourage graduate programs to constantly improve. 5.4.3

» **Survey graduate and postdoc alumni** *in order to* encourage graduate programs and departments to better prepare students and postdocs for diverse careers 2.1.3

» **Name the Graduate School** *in order to* establish an endowment, the earnings from which can help sustain initiatives to improve the quality of graduate education and postdoctoral training.

» Encourage colleges to **develop procedures** to grant/revoke the privilege of advising graduate students and postdoctoral scholars *in order to* ensure that advising is done by qualified individuals. 4.2.1

» Encourage graduate programs and departments to require (or at least strongly encourage) **graduate student and postdoc participation in professional development** activities *in order to* ensure that they are better prepared to be successful in the careers of their choice. 2.1.3

» Establish a **Faculty in Residence program** *in order to* bring new expertise, enthusiasm and viewpoints to the Graduate School.

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## ONGOING STRATEGIC INITIATIVES*

**In addition to the new initiatives outlined in its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, the Graduate School continues to work on a number of ongoing projects and activities:**

### DIVERSITY

» Community of Scholars Program 4.2.1
» McNair Scholars Visitation Program 4.1.1
» Writing Initiative 4.1.2
» Graduate student recruitment
  · DOVE Fellowship Program 4.1.1
  · Creating Inclusive Cohorts 4.1.1
» Prospective student advising 4.1.1

### SERVICE

» Graduate admissions assistance and application processing 4.1.1
» Public data portals 1.3.3
» Online constituent toolkits
» Review of proposals for new/changed academic programs
» Graduate education news & publications
» Graduate education policies & governance
» GEAR 1 and GEAR+ 2.1.3

### ADVOCACY

» Graduate student support 5.1.2
» Graduate education fellowships & competitions 5.1.2
» Doctoral Research Showcase
» Interdisciplinary initiatives 2.2.3
» University-wide Three-Minute Thesis competition

### BEST PRACTICES

» gradSERU 1.3.3; 4.2.1; 4.2.2; 5.4.3
» Academic & professional development workshops 2.1.3
» Interdisciplinary initiatives 2.2.3
» Accreditation 1.3.3
» Graduate program goals 5.4.3
» Program quality/assessment 5.4.3

*\*Numbers after bullet points refer to sections of the University-wide Strategic Plan, MPACT 2025, with which Graduate School initiatives are aligned.*

# OUR VALUES

Our values define who we are. They provide the foundation for our work. They guide our actions and behavior. They influence the way we work with each other—and the way we engage with our constituents.

## Diversity

Diversity is a driving force and a necessary condition for academic excellence. We are committed to creating an inclusive environment that embraces and respects diverse perspectives and backgrounds.

## Service

We are dedicated to providing unparalleled service to our constituents. We are approachable, transparent, and proactive. We believe in listening with compassion and responding with sensitivity.

## Integrity

We hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of integrity and take responsibility for our role as good stewards of the global community.

## Leadership

We believe everyone has the capacity to be a leader and it is our job to enable everyone we interact with to achieve their leadership potential – whether students, postdocs, or staff and faculty. We act as catalysts for change and lead by example as we pursue a shared vision.

## Joy of Life

We believe in the equal balance of work and personal life. We work to promote balance internally and externally so that everyone can be happier, healthier, and more productive in their lives.

## Collaboration

Good ideas can come from anywhere. We believe that working collaboratively— whether across the hall or across the world—makes us smarter, happier, and more successful. Being collaborative helps us remember that we share a common purpose.

## Engagement

We believe that it is critical for our staff, faculty, students and postdocs to reach beyond the walls of academia in order to apply higher learning to real world issues.

grad.umn.edu/values