COLLEGE of
PUBLIC HEALTH
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Strategic Plan Summary

Summer 2021

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MISSION, VISION, & VALUES

The East Tennessee State University (ETSU) College of Public Health (COPH) mission, vision, and values were formalized in November of 2008. During a college-wide meeting in February of 2020, faculty and staff worked collectively with Leadership Council to formally update and revise the previously established college mission, vision, and values marking the kick-off of the 2021-2026 strategic planning cycle.

Mission: To advance health and well-being for all through innovative teaching, research, and community engagement.

Vision: The ETSU College of Public Health is the school of choice for students who want an exceptional educational experience in a world-class environment.

Core Values:

- ALTRUISM: Nurture altruism and empathy;
- DIGNITY: Treat all people with unwavering dignity and respect;
- DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: Foster equity and diversity in an inclusive environment;
- EXCELLENCE: Advance excellence in teaching, scholarly activity, and community and professional service;
- INNOVATION: Nurture creativity and resourcefulness;
- INTEGRITY: Adhere to the highest ethical standards of honesty and fairness;
- TEAMWORK: Foster a collaborative environment that is professionally and personally rewarding.

ORGANIZATION and TASKS

The College Strategic Planning Committee was formally organized in spring 2020. The committee included one designated faculty representative from each department (Community & Behavioral Health, Biostatistics & Epidemiology, Environmental Health, Health Sciences, and Health Services Management & Policy) along with designated representatives from administrative staff, support staff, the Office of Student Services, and students from each of the academic programs represented in the college. The committee included:

- Arsham Alamian (Faculty, Biostatistics & Epidemiology)
- Manul Awasthi (Student, DrPH Program)
- Katie Baker (Faculty, Community & Behavioral Health)
- Christine Boykin (Student, MPH Program)
- Taylor Dula (Faculty, Office of Student Services)
- Nathan Hale (Faculty, Health Services Management & Policy)
- Harrison Ihrig (Student, B.S. Public Health)
- Ying Li (Faculty, Environmental Health)
- Jonathan Peterson (Faculty, Health Sciences)
- Jan Stork (Support Staff, Office of the Dean)
- Chris Sutter (Administrative Staff, Office of Student Services)
- Harrison Tolley (Student, B.S. Environmental Health)
- William Wamack (Student, B.S. Health Sciences)
- Rachel Kellogg (Ad Hoc & Support)
- Amal Khoury (Ad Hoc, Associate Dean for Quality & Planning)

TASKS

The key CSPC tasks and timelines for completion are shown in Figure 1 and include: data collection and review, completion of an Environmental Scan/SWOT analysis, soliciting input from other faculty and staff, soliciting stakeholder and alumni feedback, drafting and refining recommendations, and presenting a formal set of recommendations to Leadership Council in fall 2020.
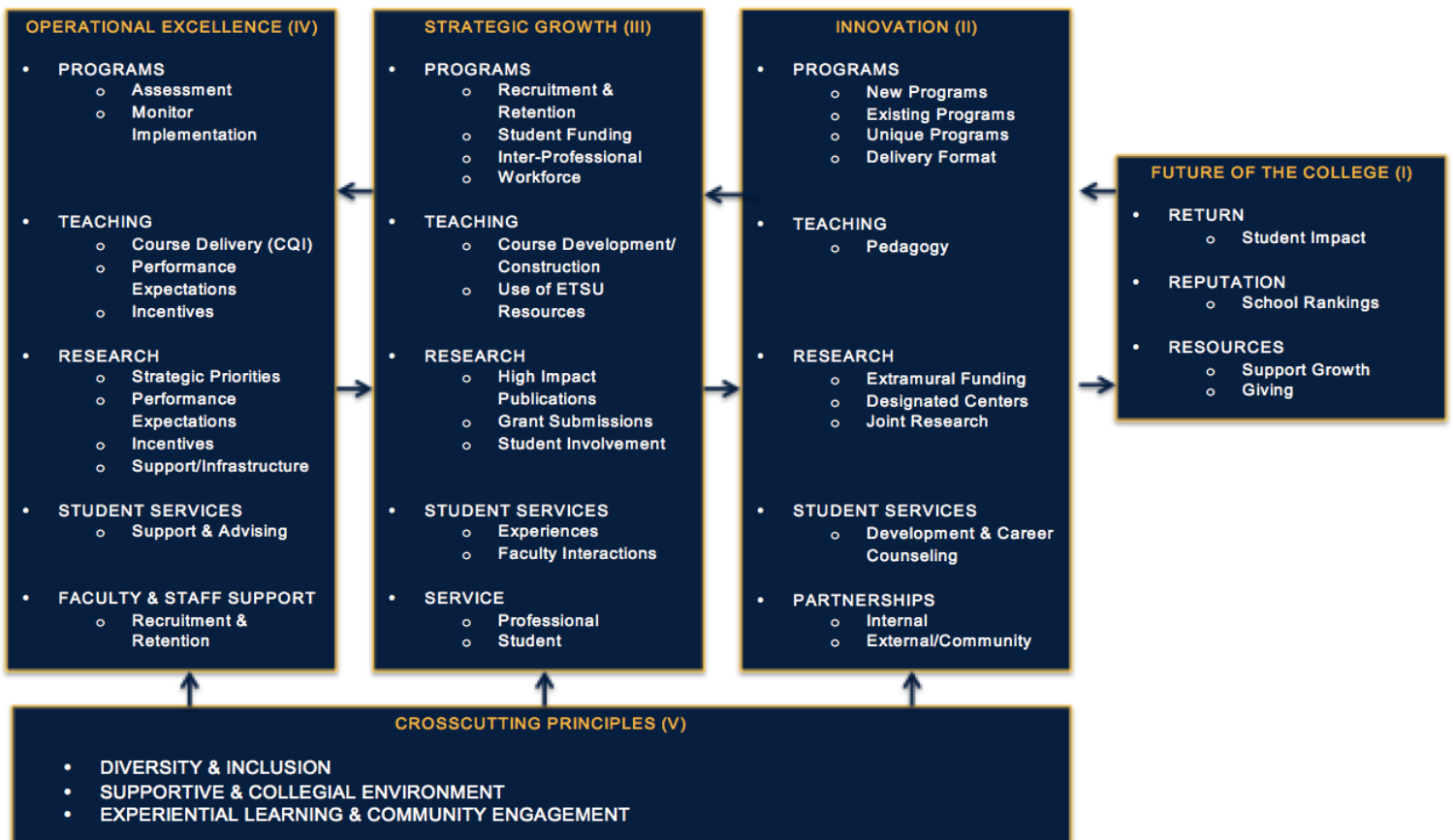
Figure 1: College Strategic Planning Committee Tasks and Timelines

Spring 2020	Summer 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Summer 2021	Fall 2021
• Initial Meeting • Organizing Framework • Collect & Review Data	• Environmental Scan/SWOT Analysis • Faculty, Staff, Student Input • Refine and Solidify Recommendations	• SP Proposal Presented to Leadership Council • SP Proposal Presented at College-Wide Meeting • Diversity & Social Justice Committee charged with developing DEIC Plan	• Leadership Council Review • Alignment with Accreditation Criteria • Launch Work on DEIC Plan	• Continue Work on DEIC Plan • Develop COPH Climate Survey	• SP and DEIC Plan presented at College-Wide Meeting • Additional Input from Internal and External Groups • Post Plan for Public Comment • Finalize Plan

ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK

The Leadership Council provided the CSPC with a broad set of potential strategic priorities. While this initial set provided important direction, the CSPC wanted to further capture the dynamic and relational nature of the foundational activities of the college that are necessary for continued success and optimal future impact (Figure 2). Capturing these relationships provided a guide for the CSPC when developing the strategic plan. While any individual component of the proposed plan is important, considering the sequential nature of the college's foundational activities across a continuum of operational excellence (quality), strategic growth (expansion), and innovation that ultimately position the college for optimal impact provided a foundation to guide the development of the plan. Where possible, the CSPC provides related objectives and measures across the continuum within thematic domains. Embedded within the continuum are crosscutting principles that reflect the shared values and culture of the college.

Figure 2: Strategic Planning Organizing Framework

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE (IV)
- PROGRAMS
  - Assessment
  - Monitor Implementation
- TEACHING
  - Course Delivery (CQI)
  - Performance Expectations
  - Incentives
- RESEARCH
  - Strategic Priorities
  - Performance Expectations
  - Incentives
  - Support/Infrastructure
- STUDENT SERVICES
  - Support & Advising
- FACULTY & STAFF SUPPORT
  - Recruitment & Retention

STRATEGIC GROWTH (III)
- PROGRAMS
  - Recruitment & Retention
  - Student Funding
  - Inter-Professional
  - Workforce
- TEACHING
  - Course Development/Construction
  - Use of ETSU Resources
- RESEARCH
  - High Impact Publications
  - Grant Submissions
  - Student Involvement
- STUDENT SERVICES
  - Experiences
  - Faculty Interactions
- SERVICE
  - Professional
  - Student

INNOVATION (II)
- PROGRAMS
  - New Programs
  - Existing Programs
  - Unique Programs
  - Delivery Format
- TEACHING
  - Pedagogy
- RESEARCH
  - Extramural Funding
  - Designated Centers
  - Joint Research
- STUDENT SERVICES
  - Development & Career Counseling
- PARTNERSHIPS
  - Internal
  - External/Community

FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE (I)
- RETURN
  - Student Impact
- REPUTATION
  - School Rankings
- RESOURCES
  - Support Growth
  - Giving

CROSSCUTTING PRINCIPLES (V)
- DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
- SUPPORTIVE & COLLEGIAL ENVIRONMENT
- EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN/SWOT ANALYSIS

Existing data from multiple sources was available and considered as part of the Scan/SWOT process. These included: ETSU strategic plan, college strategic plan and associated reports, college enrollment data, alumni survey, student exit survey, Office of Student Services SWOT Analysis and strategic plan, College of Public Health Rankings, and Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) comparison data. These data elements were summarized and folded into CSPC guided discussion.

While review of these materials was an important component of the process, the use of existing data and historical precedent also has the potential to narrow the frame of reference in which the committee operates. Initial group discussions worked to balance the pragmatism examining existing data to inform the strategic plan, with the creativity needed to cast a larger vision for the future of the college.

The embodiment of what the college represents and the building blocks for a strategic plan are reflected in the revised mission, vision, and core values. Guided discussion for the Environmental Scan/SWOT analysis focused primarily on further assessing, defining, and developing concepts embedded in the vision and mission—primarily themes related to teaching, research, community engagement, and student experiences. The discussion guide, full list of questions, and a full accounting of items discussed are provided in the appendices in the meeting minutes. Themes emerging from the guided discussion were further partitioned into a formal SWOT analysis. A broad summary of key themes is presented.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN/SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

External Environment

The number of public heath programs is growing nationally, within the region, and within the state of Tennessee. Since 2010, however, overall enrollment in post-secondary institutions has decreased with shifting demographics and external economic influences. During the most recent academic year, approximately 70% of graduate students were in-state residents, 15% international, and 15% out-of-state students. The proportion of student enrollment from out-of-state students has recently decreased relative to historical percentages. Furthermore, international students are facing barriers to obtaining student visas and relocating to the United States. Data from ASPPH suggests that applications for graduate public health degree programs had decreased nationally until 2020/21 when applications significantly increased. Furthermore, ASPPH data also suggests that graduate student enrollment within the college largely parallels current public health rankings data—students who applied to ETSU but choose to attend another program most often attend a higher ranked program. Faced with increasing competition for fewer students, the college must ensure a high-quality educational product, delivered in a format that is accessible to both traditional and non-traditional students. Furthermore, in an increasingly competitive marketplace, the college must find a way to market strengths, hold the Tennessee market, and expand into new markets.

Internal Environment

In addition to increasing external competition, the new budget model also creates additional internal competition for incoming and existing ETSU students. While the college houses a suite of undergraduate degree programs, continued efforts to showcase public heath programs and the college, particularly for pre-professional students, are warranted. The college has many unique features, in addition to academic programs, that create a rewarding educational experience for students. One theme that became evident during CSPC discussions is that existing students are an important, but not fully developed, asset for reaching other students. Sustaining growth and remaining on firm financial footing will require intentional efforts to recruit and retain existing students.

Strengths

Collectively the committee was in agreement that the college is well positioned for growth following the recent degree program revisions and addition of new degree and certificate programs within the new budget model. The college also has unique features—a rural and Appalachia focus and educational opportunities with the Project EARTH (Employing Available Resources to Transform Health) programs—that provide students with unique experiences for varied careers in public health. The CSPC also noted that the college network of practice partners and opportunities for student field placements is a significant strength.

Research capacity within the college also emerged as an important strength. The overall level of funding, number of funded investigators, and publications has increased significantly over the past five years. Advancing research prestige and significant external funding have put the college in a position to recruit additional faculty and researchers, and create more learning opportunities for students. Collectively, the emerging research portfolio of the college is a strength moving into the next cycle.

Student services and centralized advising were also noted as strengths. The college hosts a number of events, activities, and opportunities to enhance the student experience. Consolidating and centralizing key administrative functions within the Office of Student Services has the potential to create efficiency, reduce confusion, and enhance the operations of the college.

The committee also noted that the college has much intangible strength that is often not evident in measurable objectives. Beyond a concern for student success in the workplace or continued education, the college supports students holistically. A genuine sense of concern for student well-being and working with students through various challenges to ensure success is embedded in the culture of the college. This became evident during the spring semester and global pandemic. The health and well-being of students and their families was of primary concern, with academics playing an important, but secondary role. Furthermore, the college has a very supportive and collegial work environment.

Weaknesses (Opportunities for Improvement)

The strength of online instruction quickly emerged as a key theme, particularly given the transition to online learning with the pandemic occurring in the spring of 2020. Student Assessments of Instruction are typically lower for online courses than what is observed among on-ground courses. While the

college has offered online graduate degrees previously (which is a strength), the committee did express concern that the quality of online instruction and the integration of best-practices in online instructional design may be lagging—which is particularly worrisome given the ongoing need for online course options. As more students search for online programs and more programs enter the online market (also a threat), a failure to evolve may undermine program growth.

While research capacity within the college has expanded significantly, the collective amount of funding and publications may be skewed to a small number of primary investigators. Efforts to continue faculty and staff development remains an important priority.

Opportunities

The most notable opportunity emerging from committee discussions is the need to strategically market the college. While marketing individual programs is important, the need to construct a broader narrative reflecting the college as a whole is needed. This includes degree programs, student experiences, faculty and student successes, unique college assets, and the overall culture of learning within the college. The committee noted that a more strategic marketing plan that also embeds elements of student recruitment and retention might be more effective over the long-term.

The committee also noted that in many respects, the college is a top institution for supporting student research, particularly at the undergraduate level. More recently, graduate student research opportunities have also expanded with increased research funding. The opportunity to further market student research experiences represents an important opportunity moving forward.

Threats

Undoubtedly the most significant threat to the overall future of the college is the increasing competition both internally and externally. Public health programs are emerging nationally, regionally, and within the state that provide increasing options for students. The geographic proximity of new and emerging programs has the potential to cut into the on-ground program market and underscores the importance of developing and delivering high-quality online programs to be competitive with emerging threats.

As the research portfolio of the college continues to expand, ensuring that faculty strategically publish in high quality, reputable journals remains important. An emphasis on high value publications that increase the research profile of the college is important.

One threat also emerging is over-committed faculty and the potential impact on productivity. As the college continues to grow programs, enrollment, courses, research expectations, and service activities— faculty experience many competing responsibilities. While this is largely expected and necessary, it can also influence morale and faculty retention. While growth is important, the committee noted that growth must be proportional to existing and future capacity.

Many of the emerging themes centered on the need for program growth, increased recruitment and retention efforts, and strategic marketing. These activities tend to fall within the Office of Student Services and to a large degree, overlap existing activities and initiatives. A possible limiting factor that

must be taken into consideration is the need to support expanded or enhanced functions for student services.

PROPOSED STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Following Environmental SCAN/SWOT analysis, the committee distilled the salient themes into larger groupings, embedded within the organizing framework, that reflect broader potential strategic priorities. The more narrowed set of potential priorities are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Potential Priorities and Areas of Interest

Programs/Teaching
Operational Excellence
Assess & Improve On-Line Instruction
Set Performance Expectations & Course Remediation (as needed)
Identify Alternate Tool for Student Assessment of Instruction
Review Revised Curriculum & Ensure Consistency of Content/Activities
Strategic Growth
Recruit Existing ETSU Students to COPH Majors/Minors
Expand Graduate Degree Program Enrollment Within TN
Expand Graduate Degree Program Enrollment Outside TN
MS Program
PhD Program
Comprehensive Strategic Marketing Plan
Innovation
Hybrid/Online DrPH Program
Expand Use & Profile of Project EARTH
Integrate Research Expertise w/ Curriculum & Course Offerings
Interprofessional Education
Research
Operational Excellence
Clarify Performance Expectations
Strategic Growth
Align Faculty & Staff Recruitment w/ Research Priority Areas
Diversification of Funded Researchers & Projects
Encourage/Incentivize Value & High Impact Publications
Leverage & Align Existing Research Programs to Seek New/Joint Opportunities
Marketing Student Research Experiences
Innovation
Integration of Students in Research (Including Dissemination Efforts)
Student Services
Operational Excellence
Enhancing Student Experience & Faculty/Staff Interactions
Strategic Growth
Student Ambassadors (Marketing & Recruitment)
Employment Over Summer for International Students
Innovation
Career Counseling & Field Placements
Faculty & Staff Support
Development of Junior Faculty (Research & Teaching)
Incentivizing Performance (Teaching/Research/Service)
Develop & Build Teaching and Research Infrastructure
Leadership Development for Mid-Career Faculty
Grant Writing Support for Faculty & Staff
In-House Peer Review of Grant Applications
Grand Rounds Series

While the list of strategic priorities was helpful, it was recognized that each of the potential strategic priorities varied with respect to the potential impact and level of investment potentially required. As such, the committee used a priority ranking process to create a grid of strategic priorities reflecting the impact relative to the investment. The purpose was not to suggest that certain priorities were less important or shouldn't be pursued—the intent was to sort the strategic priorities in a way that provides some additional context so that recommended strategies and activities can be balanced and thoughtful.

Recognizing that other faculty and staff not on the committee are affected by the plan and have a vested interest in the future success of the college, the strategic priority ranking process was extended to all faculty and staff in the college to obtain a broader perspective. Figure 3 provides a summary of final rankings.

Figure 3: Summary of Strategic Priorities by Level of Investment and Potential Impact

5	Lower Investment/High Impact (Easy Wins)	High Investment/High Impact (Major Projects)
Impact/Return	Integrate Research Expertise w/ Curriculum & Course Offerings Leadership Development for Mid-Career Faculty Expand Graduate Degree Program Enrollment Within TN Career Counseling & Field Placements Integration of Students in Research (Including Dissemination Efforts) Align Faculty & Staff Recruitment w/ Research Priority Areas	Development of Junior Faculty (Research & Teaching) Develop & Build Teaching & Research Infrastructure Expand Graduate Degree Program Enrollment Outside Leverage Existing Research Programs to Seek Joint Opportunities Grant Writing Support for Faculty & Staff Assess & Improve On-Line Instruction Comprehensive Strategic Marketing Plan Encourage/Incentivize Value & High Impact Publications Enhancing Student Experience & Faculty/Staff In
	Lower Investment/Lesser Impact	**High Investment/Lesser Impact**
	Student Ambassadors (Marketing & Recruitment) Set Performance Expectations & Course Remediation (as needed) Recruit Existing ETSU Students to COPH Majors/Minors Clarify Performance Expectations Marketing Student Research Experiences Incentivizing Performance (Teaching/Research/Service) Inter-Professional Education Expand Use & Profile of Valleybrook Identify Alternate Tool for Student Assessment of Instruction Grand Rounds Series	Add PhD Program Review Revised Curriculum & Integration for Consistency Diversification of Funded Researchers & Projects In-House Peer Review of Grant Applications Hybrid/On-Line DrPH Program Employment Over Summer for International Students Add MS Program
0	**Effort/Investment**	**5**

Investment: Financial or Human
Impact/Return: Reputation or Resources
0 = Minimum | 5 = Maximum

PROPOSED GOALS and OBJECTIVES

The proposed 2021-2026 strategic plan is divided into eight domains, representing broad strategic priority areas. Each domain includes an overarching goal and a select number of objectives that describe specific actions that should be taken to achieve the goal.

DOMAIN	GOAL	SMART Objectives
1) Future of the College	Position the College for Optimal Impact at the Local, Regional and National Level.	Objective 1: Advance the college as the school of choice for students seeking an exceptional education in a world-class environment. Objective 2: Ensure students are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully transition into the workforce or future educational pursuits. Objective 3: Expand the amount and diversity of funding supporting the college. Objective 4: Strategically market college programs, student experiences, and faculty expertise within and outside the university to foster growth.
2) Academic Programs	Advance Excellence in Program Delivery to Effectively Meet Student and Workforce Needs.	Objective 1: Modify and expand graduate degree programs to effectively meet student and workforce needs. Objective 2: Increase enrollment and reach in existing degree and certificate programs.
3) Teaching and Course Delivery	Deliver High-Quality Courses using Best Practice in Teaching Pedagogy & Course Delivery.	Objective 1: Assess teaching effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement. Objective 2: Integrate best practices in teaching pedagogy and content delivery into courses. Objective 3: Enhance college capacity for instruction in the online environment. Objective 4: Expand course offerings that mirror the research priorities and content areas of expertise within the college.

4) Research	Produce High-Impact Relevant Research focused on Solutions to Key Health Challenges.	Objective 1: Increase the amount of grant funding and funded researchers in the college. Objective 2: Increase the diversity of funded researchers and projects. Objective 3: Establish a national reputation in 2 – 3 research priority areas aligned with the college context. Objective 4: Systematically involve students in the conduct and dissemination of research activities.
5) Student Success and Experience	Expand Opportunities for Student Engagement beyond the Classroom.	Objective 1: Ensure students have the opportunity for meaningful experiences during their time at the university.
6) Faculty and Staff Support	Ensure Faculty and Staff are Adequately Resourced for Career Success.	Objective 1: Facilitate formal mentoring and professional development activities for junior faculty. Objective 2: Encourage leadership development opportunities for mid-career faculty. Objective 3: Encourage staff professional development and recognition. Objective 4: Enhance organizational support and communication.
7) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Foster an Environment of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion among Students, Faculty and Staff.	Under Development by Diversity and Social Justice Committee
8) Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement	Seek Mutually Beneficial Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations and Other Institutions to Support Growth.	Objective 1: Establish partnerships that enhance the college's enrollment, training, research, and advocacy efforts while contributing content and methodological expertise to community organizations.

Following the establishment of the formal priority domains and broad goals, ad-hoc workgroups within the CSPC were established to further develop each domain's objectives, outcomes, and action items. The CSPC completed a formal assessment of the outcomes/measures from the current strategic plan to determine which, if any, outcomes/measures should continue in the new strategic plan. Given that

several measures are foundational to the operations of the college and are required for other forms of accreditation and quality reporting, approximately 35% - 40% of previous measures were retained in the new strategic plan. This provided the workgroups with a framework to integrate well-established measures with new or revised measures reflecting committee discussions and emerging ideas.