

**NC STATE**



# **Wolfpack 2030: Powering the Extraordinary**

**NC State University**

## Introduction

Life has changed drastically since NC State's inception in 1887, but our mission as a university has never wavered. We are committed to meeting the needs of the people of North Carolina for a "liberal and practical education in the several pursuits and professions in life" and to making contributions to the state's economic development.

Today, this mission is more critical than ever.

The world's biggest challenges are increasingly complex, and they require a level of innovation, insight and collaboration that NC State is uniquely positioned to provide. And we, as a university, are committed to addressing those challenges.

However, as we enter a new decade, we acknowledge that the university — and the world at large — is facing significant obstacles. This strategic plan was drafted amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has posed considerable challenges to human health, educational opportunity, economic strength and social cohesion around the world. On a societal level, issues of racial inequity and civil unrest have rightly been thrust to the forefront of our collective consciousness.

But in true NC State form, we choose to see these challenges as opportunities — opportunities for us to lead, to think strategically, to infuse inclusion and equity into all we do, to become a more agile organization and to better serve our students, faculty, staff, partners and the people of the great state of North Carolina.

We won't be starting from scratch. We are building upon the many successes of Pathway to the Future, our previous 10-year strategic plan. Under the vision, direction and alignment of that plan, the university has achieved unprecedented levels of momentum and accomplishment in terms of student success, faculty research, expanded partnerships and brand recognition. In many ways, the last 10 years helped truly define our university's bold commitment to Think and Do.

But we're not done yet. Our stakeholders, both internal and external, have enthusiastically embraced this calling. Perhaps more than ever, the world needs what only NC State can bring, and we still have work to do to achieve our full potential.

In Wolfpack 2030: Powering the Extraordinary, we build upon past successes and address areas of needed growth in order to more effectively fulfill our important mission. As a university, we must respond with agility to technological advancements and changes in the higher-education landscape. We recognize that we must focus more strongly on ensuring our campus is a safe, inclusive and equitable place for all. We acknowledge that the global workforce has changed in significant ways, highlighting the importance of embracing diverse perspectives and the need for a bold generation of graduates who are excited to tackle new challenges, prepared to create new technologies and poised to launch new industries. We believe that innovative partnerships, cutting-edge technologies and critical research will allow us to meet the grand challenges facing our state, country and world.

We celebrate the interconnectedness of our campus community. Our faculty cannot fully succeed without each other's help or the support of our staff ... our students cannot reach their potential without the help of our faculty and the support of our donors and friends ... our researchers cannot ultimately solve the world's biggest problems without the help of our government and industry partners ... and on it goes. It takes us all — as one Pack — to be and to drive the change we want to see in the world.

We've said it before, and we boldly embrace the challenge once again: **NC State, let's roll up our sleeves and get to work.**

The world is waiting.

### **NC State's Mission, Vision and Values**

*Our mission ...*

As a research-extensive land-grant university, North Carolina State University is dedicated to excellent teaching, the creation and application of knowledge, and engagement with public and private partners. By uniting our strength in science and technology with a commitment to excellence in a comprehensive range of disciplines, NC State promotes an integrated approach to problem-solving that transforms lives and provides leadership for social, economic and technological development across North Carolina and around the world.

*Approved by: NC State University Board of Trustees, 4/22/11; UNC Board of Governors, 6/10/11.*

*Our vision ...*

As a preeminent public research university, NC State University will be increasingly recognized nationally and internationally for its innovation in education, research, scholarship and engagement that solves the world's most critical challenges. NC State will be known as a diverse, equitable and inclusive community that has a transformative impact on society and advances the greater good.

*Our values ...*

**Excellence** — in innovation, education and discovery, reflected in our unwavering commitment to pursue research and scholarship that solve problems and advance the greater good.

**Community** — in how we respect and care for all within our university community, value the contributions of every member of our Wolfpack, promote health and well-being, and help one another succeed.

**Inclusion** — through a culture that promotes personal excellence and institutional equity by seeking, welcoming and supporting individuals and ideas from a broad diversity of backgrounds.

**Freedom** — in thought, speech, expression, inquiry and dialogue as a critical part of our mission to pursue and disseminate knowledge while promoting civil and respectful discourse.

**Integrity** — in all we do, reflected in our commitment to the highest standards of ethical behavior and our dedication to transparency and accountability in governance.

**Collaboration** — across colleges and divisions, disciplines and perspectives, and in how we partner with a broad range of organizations to find solutions to challenges at home and around the world.

**Sustainability** — in our commitment to wise stewardship of resources, prudent financial planning and environmentally responsible operations.

### **Wolfpack 2030: Powering the Extraordinary Goals**

- > **Goal 1:** Empower students for a lifetime of success and impact.
- > **Goal 2:** Ensure preeminence in research, scholarship, innovation and collaboration.
- > **Goal 3:** Expand and advance our engagement with and service to North Carolina and beyond, defining the standard for a 21st-century land-grant university.
- > **Goal 4:** Champion a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging and well-being in all we do.
- > **Goal 5:** Improve university effectiveness through transformative technologies, cutting-edge processes and actionable data.
- > **Goal 6:** Lead in developing innovative partnerships, entrepreneurial thinking and applied problem-solving.
- > **Goal 7:** Elevate the national and global reputation and visibility of NC State.

### **Goal 1: Empower students for a lifetime of success and impact.**

#### **Executive Summary**

NC State students will acquire specific knowledge, skills and experiences — as well as the necessary values and dispositions — to not only excel professionally, but also to be leaders in advancing a productive and civil society. As a forward-thinking institution dedicated to excellence in teaching, we will be a leader in teaching and the digital transformation of higher education, delivering value to our students and ensuring the resiliency of our institution. Our faculty and staff will empower students to be entrepreneurial, independent and inclusive thinkers, strong in their disciplines and experienced in interdisciplinary collaboration, prepared to contribute impactfully in a diverse, global society. As they progress through their careers, NC State will provide relevant lifelong learning opportunities to assist in their personal and professional development to ensure they are not only NC State alumni, but also NC State students for a lifetime.

#### **Exposition**

NC State maintains a steadfast commitment to graduating students — from all backgrounds and walks of life — who are empowered for a lifetime of success and impact. As we articulate our vision for student success over the next decade, we are keenly aware that many across our university have

been affected by the seismic shifts happening around the world. The future of education is suddenly more ambiguous and challenging. Still, this university has always met challenges with resilience, creativity, insight and care. Passing this capacity on to our undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral scholars is crucial to our shared futures and exemplifies the meaning of student success.

NC State's founding mission is to create and apply knowledge that "transforms lives and provides leadership of social, economic and technological development across North Carolina and around the world." The distinctiveness of our mission spares NC State the question of **why** faced by many institutions. Our questions are those of **how** we graduate students equipped to carry forth our bold mission of leadership and service. We will do this by proudly embracing our land-grant mission and ensuring its presence throughout the intersecting dimensions of campus culture, the student experience and our curriculum.

As a university, we will work to identify and remove arbitrary and inequitable barriers to the success of not only our students but also our faculty, staff and other partners. We will explore and implement effective ways to ensure greater accessibility to our university for those who want to join us in our mission of creating the next generation of Think and Do learners and leaders.

While technology continues to drastically change the world around us, NC State has remained at the forefront of welcoming and utilizing new forms of technology throughout our programs and curriculum. We will continue to evaluate and explore emerging and promising technologies that enrich the intellectual lives of our students, help them build essential technical skills and prepare them for a lifetime of professional, personal, civic and community prosperity.

We will work to instill into our students the importance of our university's core values of excellence, community, inclusion, freedom, integrity, collaboration and sustainability, so they carry those values into society and their careers.

The success of our students is greatly dependent on high-quality and relevant teaching from our excellent faculty. We commit to empowering our faculty and advancing our pedagogy in ways that best serve our students, whether they are learning in person, online or both. We aim to be leaders in content delivery, powerfully uniting digital tools with high-impact in-person engagement.

We recognize that graduates at all levels face rapidly changing economic, social and workforce demands. They need more than knowledge to get their first job; they must also possess the dispositions, skills and values to sustain them in adapting to circumstances, creating opportunities and assuming new careers throughout their lives. They must be able to not only work with those from diverse backgrounds, experiences and cultures; they also need to see the value that comes from opening their minds to differing perspectives.

Furthermore, we recognize our unique role in preparing graduates for careers that don't currently exist in industries yet to be discovered. NC State graduates are highly sought after not only because of their

technical and intellectual competencies, but also for their ability to creatively apply those competencies to real-world situations. As our mantra goes, our graduates think **and do**. And employers have long recognized this important attribute that sets NC State graduates apart from their peers.

To that end, we commit to expanding the number of high-impact practices offered to our students. These experiences are shown to increase student engagement, reduce time to degree completion and increase graduation rates. From internships to learning communities to research projects, our students will leave the university equipped with more than just a diploma; they'll also have a compelling and well-rounded resume.

As the world rapidly changes, so do the jobs our graduates are seeking. It is imperative for NC State to provide lifelong learning opportunities to its graduates seeking to acquire new skills and competencies as their professions pivot and evolve. As a premier institution of learning, we are uniquely positioned to provide upskilling, credentialing and supplemental educational experiences that will keep our graduates coming back year after year to ensure they remain at the top of their professional fields.

As the landscape of higher education continues to change and broaden, NC State has more opportunities to serve a greater number of individuals in their pursuit of knowledge and skills. Over the last few decades, new forms of educational delivery, such as certificates, digital badges and micro-credentials, have allowed institutions of higher education to expand traditional methods of recognizing educational achievement. These new designations, driven by the need to provide timely and subject-focused instruction, allow NC State to provide educational value to individuals across a lifetime.

To achieve this, NC State must continue to develop seamless processes linking credentialing and degree programs, allowing the university to be a nimble and innovative leader offering high-quality learning opportunities to all who seek to learn. These programs allow people to enhance their knowledge, marketability, development of specific competencies and access to knowledge currently in demand. They allow degree students to engage with practitioners and other professionals, while also permitting those seeking credentialing to accumulate a collection of work — when appropriate and approved by departments — that counts as credit toward a degree program, further augmenting their connections to NC State.

At NC State, we seek to ensure a broad path for learning that truly spans a lifetime.

## **Goal 2: Ensure preeminence in research, scholarship, innovation and collaboration.**

### **Executive Summary**

NC State's community of researchers and scholars — infused with our unique combination of innovation and collaboration, and steeped in a tradition of deep thought and practical application — is a key strategic advantage. We are strongly committed to our disciplines and equally dedicated to working across traditional disciplinary boundaries. We will devote attention and resources to

developing and leveraging our spheres of excellence to enable maximum impact as we expand and enhance our excellence to address societal need for the public good. We will focus on the critical institutional support required to advance operational excellence in our internal assessments, processes, infrastructure and procedures to most effectively support NC State researchers and scholars in advancing the university's mission. With continued commitment to research, scholarship, innovation and collaboration, NC State will respond to — and provide solutions for — the world's greatest problems, ensuring its continued place as a preeminent research institution.

## **Exposition**

NC State is a preeminent research university dedicated to working across traditional disciplinary boundaries and partnering with communities, government and industry to overcome the grand challenges facing society. You can witness the impact of our faculty's work throughout the university, in areas ranging from education to textiles to veterinary medicine and everything in between. Regardless of the location, be it a lab in Jordan Hall or a field in Sampson County, our faculty and students engage with real problems to find real solutions.

To advance this critical part of our university's mission, it is imperative that we continue to recruit and retain world-class faculty and researchers, and that we focus our resources and capacity on building a rich and inclusive environment that fosters innovation and intellectual excitement. To accomplish this, NC State must continually build upon the successes we pursued in our previous strategic plan: offering competitive startup packages, salaries and compensation, as well as a teaching workload in line with peer institutions, committed and excellent staff support, and innovative support structures in which scholars can achieve their full potential.

As a forward-thinking higher educational institution, NC State must consider how to leverage digital transformation to augment our research and innovation practice. We believe building digital research infrastructure that supports the ever-evolving research and scholarly environment is an essential component of the digital transformation of the university as a whole.

NC State's funded research activity continues to grow impressively, and we commit to providing the additional support necessary to keep pace with these teams. We must consider issues such as how to effectively share active data sets for real-time collaboration and which systems and expertise to employ to integrate and process heterogeneous data. Classic research infrastructure is available to researchers with a baseline level of technical skills, but work remains to define and develop the next generation of research infrastructure and support. This infrastructure should include agile information systems, as well as a network of expertise and consulting services that keep pace with evolving research practices.

Investing in digital infrastructure will not only benefit our researchers and university, it will also help us in our grander mission: to serve our state — and beyond. Research data may be used in different ways by research teams at multiple institutions. As data sets are themselves becoming an important research output, we must build upon our capacity to provide data management, computational and

security consulting services that allow data to be securely accessed, described, organized, published and preserved in a way that allows their reuse and ensures their compliance with data access requirements set forth by funding agencies.

A core component of our mission is to share the fruits of our research with our industry, community and government partners and the public at large. Using technology to thoughtfully advance research and scholarship efforts at the university can improve quality of life, drive our economy and positively impact the world around us.

Moreover, we believe a critical aspect of the university's ongoing effectiveness is bringing in external funding support. Increasing the extent to which facilities and administrative funds are being used to support the scholarly and research efforts of our faculty and staff — and to expand our funding base — is an important way to achieve this goal. Considering ways to use facilities and administrative funds to support interdisciplinary and interunit collaboration is crucial. As funders seek to support investigations into complex scientific and societal problems, the university must leverage its resources to incentivize scholarly collaborations across disciplines and units.

The interruption in research activity due to COVID-19 has provided a lesson in the fragility of research infrastructure. We are likely to see worldwide disruptions continue for some time as travel restrictions and physical distancing guidelines restrict traditional field and lab research and interfere with scholarly communications channels. We need to take additional steps to be a resilient, highly distributed, low-density and network-based research university in order to become a more resilient research institution in the future.

### **Goal 3: Expand and advance our engagement with and service to North Carolina and beyond, defining the standard for a 21st-century land-grant university.**

#### **Executive Summary**

Founded as a land-grant university with a mission of teaching, research and service, NC State has impacted countless individuals and communities since its inception in 1887. NC State's service mission has expanded beyond our traditional roots in agriculture and industrial extension to touch a variety of disciplines, from education to business to global health. We are committed to advancing our engagement with and service to the people of North Carolina by delivering broader, tangible impacts that improve people's lives every day. We will continue to collaborate with community partners to address the social, economic and environmental challenges facing our state, nation and world.

#### **Exposition**

NC State was built with a purpose: to meet the needs of North Carolina and the country, and to create lasting prosperity for all. We've summarized the way we achieve that purpose with the words "think and do." Today, this critical mission distinguishes us at a time of unprecedented challenges to higher education and accelerating change in the world. Fulfilling it requires a renewed commitment between our faculty, staff, students and the communities and partners we serve.

We recognize that thinking alone will not feed, clothe, heal, fuel, inspire or sustain a growing population. We must deliver broader, tangible and purposeful impacts. NC State needs to optimize our operations so we can be — and become renowned as — a solutions center for North Carolina and the world. Partners seek us out because they know we'll collaborate with them to find answers and solve problems. Faculty and staff come here to live and work in a best-in-class environment of relentless curiosity, rooted in an inclusive and supportive community. Students from across the state and around the world join us to learn the skills, dispositions and abilities they need to be world-class, roll-up-your-sleeves problem-solvers, and they keep coming back to adapt and learn as the challenges mount.

Communities and companies ask us to partner with them to address the myriad technological, economic, social, geographic and other challenges they face and to identify near- and long-term solutions that work. Funders at all levels are looking for measurable impacts on the public good as a return on their investments. New models for university-community collaborations are developing across the country, leading to innovative university structures and transformative research supporting high-impact engagement practices.

Calls for our expertise, our experience and our help are only growing. We must be poised to respond.

To that end, we must further integrate our education, research and public engagement missions so they catalyze one another, becoming a cohesive, focused source of energy, innovation, inspiration and direction — a culture of Think and Do. We must intensify our commitment and capability to respond to the full range of community needs through in-person and virtual engagement. We must better align resources and infrastructure for extension services and new public engagement initiatives, and we must build connections between them.

Technology will continue to be a critical tool in accomplishing this mission. Outreach, engagement and extension, framed within 21st-century digital access and literacies, have the potential to advance digital access in transformational ways for the university and the state. By further infusing technology outreach and digital outreach into NC State's extension enterprise, the university can partner with industries and governments to build critical digital infrastructure and develop fundamental literacies and capabilities to engage this infrastructure.

Industry Expansion Solutions, the Citizen Science Campus and our digital humanities programs are examples the university can expand upon. The increased importance of digital technologies in all facets of life, the persistent digital divide among the communities of North Carolina and NC State's robust extension infrastructure throughout the state present opportunities to develop a digital engagement model, enabling us to serve more North Carolinians than ever before.

Today it is increasingly crucial for NC State to continue to fulfill our land-grant mission and share the impacts of our work: talent development, innovation, discovery, service and extension of knowledge and research-based information to improve the lives of North Carolinians.

After all, the exceptional research, teaching and extension conducted at NC State is vital to the future of our state, nation and world.

#### **Goal 4: Champion a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging and well-being in all we do.**

##### **Executive Summary**

NC State's strength comes from all of its amazing people and their diversity of thought and experience. We believe that institutionalized inequality, including racism, is unacceptable in our nation and state, and on campus. We commit to creating sustainable systemic change across the university that improves our campus culture and empowers NC State to be a truly inclusive, welcoming and supportive environment for all. Therefore, as an institution, we must ensure an equitable, accessible and welcoming environment so all members of the Wolfpack community — especially those in underserved populations — feel respected, valued and a sense of belonging in every corner of campus. We will work to ensure diverse perspectives are embraced at all levels, in all processes and through all decisions. We will work to promote the health and well-being of our campus community. We seek to invest our minds and hearts at the individual level, and our capacity and resources at the institutional level, to bring about and sustain needed change in a way that champions equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging and well-being at NC State.

##### **Exposition**

The impacts of a global pandemic and our collective witness to systemic racial injustice have magnified disparities not only around the world, but also on our campus. Therefore, it is more critical than ever that we work to ensure everyone — faculty, staff and students — feels a sense of belonging within our university as we humbly face and vigorously address inequities and strive to build an inclusive culture.

A true sense of belonging requires more than a values statement, training sessions or support services for marginalized groups that reinforce a deficit framework. It requires making equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging and well-being primary, fundamental parts of our commitment to every member of our community.

We want to take the university's charge to Think and Do and apply that same drive, fervor, collaboration and unity of purpose to achieving this critical goal. We want NC State to be known for its inclusive excellence and dedication to well-being, and to stand apart from other institutions as a role model and a leader — now and for years to come.

As NC State moves forward to further advance diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and well-being, it will be critical for this strategic plan to zealously root out areas where systemic inequities hide and correct them at the institutional level — and to continue embracing the critical underpinning of individual and interpersonal cultural competency as a key characteristic of all aspects of our broader institutional mission.

To accomplish this goal, we will operate under these guiding principles:

- > We value equity, diversity and inclusion.
- > We seek to build a culture and climate that are equitable and where everyone belongs.
- > We strive to have a safe, healthy and resilient university community.

Moreover, we will accomplish our intended goals only with a firm foundation of human rights, anti-racism and community care, with ongoing, regularly assessed education and cultural humility, and through collective action in every facet of our mission.

We also recognize that NC State should press onward in advancing a culture that fosters the well-being of its faculty, staff and students. We must respond innovatively — developing effective, impactful ways to strengthen the health and well-being of our campus community — with the intention that this work extends far beyond our campus footprint. Trends across the nation include implementing a proactive approach to well-being and using education and outreach to inspire community members to make positive changes. We will strive to cultivate and center wellness at NC State to positively impact our students and employees in the ways they learn, live and work.

## **Goal 5: Improve university effectiveness through transformative technologies, cutting-edge processes and actionable data.**

### **Executive Summary**

NC State strives to exceed best practices through customer service, employee engagement and resource management using collaborative processes that leverage data and technology. We will pursue emerging technologies that connect and empower our campus community. We will be agile and flexible in adapting to change and the evolving needs of our students, faculty and staff. NC State commits to utilizing actionable intelligence to engage in more strategically focused planning and decision-making activities that benefit our students, staff, faculty, partners and the broader community. We will attain greater efficiency and effectiveness to ensure the resiliency of our institution.

### **Exposition**

Pursuing university effectiveness plays a critical role in enabling NC State to more effectively accomplish its mission, realize its vision and achieve its strategic goals, while also allowing the university to gain a competitive advantage over other institutions, improve its rankings and reputation as a premier public research institution, and increase the university's effectiveness and productivity.

We recognize that NC State has a complex organizational structure that can sometimes impede collaboration, efficiency and innovation. Having different organizational units with different goals or metrics to define success can lead to inefficiency or inadvertent competition. Cultural or historical differences across units may exacerbate these differences. However, our previous strategic plan did much to align the university in a shared pursuit of key goals. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled a rapid and substantial increase in cross-unit communication and collaboration as the university manages the myriad of challenges associated with this crisis. Our response

has highlighted the strengths of our organization, as well as the opportunities to improve our collaboration, agility, data-driven decision-making, efficiency and communication.

Ultimately, as stated in the last strategic plan, we believe that achieving organizational excellence is dependent upon stakeholders engaging and identifying deeply with goals that are shared across the university. A key task for unit leaders and managers must be working collaboratively within and beyond their units to articulate how their group's work ties into those shared goals, and how the people within specialized units are able to contribute in measurable and meaningful ways to achieving them. Other efforts that will contribute to success include creating a common language for our shared goals and for the outcomes we will emphasize and measure in our work; developing mechanisms that allow us to visualize our progress; and rewarding units and unit leaders who reduce divisional barriers and promote collaboration. This university-first approach offsets a more siloed and individualistic approach that prioritizes the individual unit's success in accomplishing its own defined goals. Rather, we believe each unit's ultimate success is rooted in its ability to collaborate with other units in service of shared university goals.

We commit to an emphasis on shared goal-setting, cross-unit collaboration and the development of shared language and tools for collaborative work that will best serve the entire university community now and for years to come.

## **Goal 6: Lead in developing innovative partnerships, entrepreneurial thinking and applied problem-solving.**

### **Executive Summary**

At NC State, we recognize that many of society's toughest problems can only be solved through powerful multidisciplinary partnerships and an entrepreneurial approach. Our partnerships are numerous and varied, including partners in the academic, industry, government, community and nonprofit sectors. These partnerships are seen right here on campus, as well as across the state and around the world. We will remove barriers and achieve success through an ongoing commitment to innovative partnerships that bring together the brightest minds in industry, government, community and the academy to creatively tackle the great global challenges. Through innovative partnerships, academics, and co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities, we will continue to fuel and elevate NC State's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

### **Exposition**

As a university, we recognize that world-changing research and scholarship are built on innovative partnerships and that solving the grand challenges facing society requires collaboration with leading entities in the private, public and nonprofit sectors. Year after year, we have shown that partnerships create jobs and improve lives by driving cutting-edge discoveries to market. The dynamic and interconnected nature of our university is one of our most strategic competitive advantages.

NC State's commitment to partnerships — whether they are academic, industry, government,

community or nonprofit — sets us apart from other institutions, since they are central to the success of a 21st-century land-grant university. Not only do they allow NC State to maximize its positive impact on society, but they ultimately enable us to achieve our student success goals. By engaging in partnerships at multiple levels and across multiple disciplines, our students get real-world experience in tackling problems in a way that mimics the work we hope they will continue to pursue long after they leave our campus. Moreover, these partnerships allow our faculty to use their expertise to address real-world problems alongside industry and to bring those lessons into the classroom.

A successful partnership becomes a catalyst for each partner to grow its own impact, and in turn — as former UNC System president and NC State alumnus William Friday has stated — to grow economic and societal well-being. To date, NC State has more than 200 major partnerships in more than 50 countries across the globe. Our university is home to more than 70 world-class centers and institutes. More than 1,000 NC State faculty are members of these institutes and centers, which work on interdisciplinary projects leading to new programs and discoveries. When these factors are combined with the depth and breadth of our expertise, it becomes obvious that NC State is positioned to collaborate like never before to find unified solutions to the global challenges facing society and the environment.

A key differentiator for NC State is our Centennial Campus, home to 75 corporate, government and nonprofit partners. NC State ranks No. 2 in industry research funding and No. 7 in R&D expenditures among public universities without a medical school. As we embark on this new strategic plan, we must prioritize educational, research and engagement programs that provide the NC State community with the best opportunities to translate their educational, research and professional development activities into graduate employability and success in competitive fields.

We believe research partnerships are fundamental to our success, yet our partnerships extend beyond research and scholarship. We celebrate the fact that thousands of important partnerships exist across the university, between students, staff and faculty members, local community members, alumni, startup companies, entrepreneurs, multinational corporations, other universities, government agencies and many more innovative collaborators.

Our university is in the top 10 nationally for almost all innovation metrics (startups launched, patents filed, licenses and options executed, etc.). Partnerships are a driver for our impact. NC State has an opportunity to build on this national reputation by becoming an international powerhouse of economic development and vitality that draws investment into North Carolina. Over the next 10 years, we hope to expand partnerships across the university so they enable even broader and deeper relationships. To accomplish this task, we recognize that additional personnel and space are required both centrally and within each college and other units to facilitate building and strengthening institutional partnerships.

To ensure the most effective partnerships — whether internal or external — we will work diligently to align strategies, develop shared outcomes and build trust in a manner that is more relational

than transactional. We will strategically develop a local innovation ecosystem that results in transformative outcomes benefiting all stakeholders.

We will work to integrate efforts around campus into organized units, such as new consortia and institutes, that further enable access to community, government, industry and other partners. Moreover, we must invest in both physical and virtual spaces that enhance research; promote collaboration and engagement with industry and the community; enable flexible visits by research scholars and industry partners; and bring students, faculty and staff together. While NC State currently has unique and sophisticated spaces such as the Hunt Library, the eGarage and expanding developments on Centennial Campus — all arising from implementation of the previous strategic plan — we have an opportunity and a need for new multipurpose and flexible spaces that further augment our partnership services and support.

Additionally, to further facilitate these innovative partnerships, NC State must foster central coordination of a partnership strategy among a series of decentralized internal partners, thereby building a more effective and cohesive internal partnering ecosystem. We will continue to ensure ease of engagement for our university partners, reduce partner pain points and leverage areas of strength to build strategic identities that are differentiated from other universities. In the coming years, we will continue to organize and launch key initiatives that leverage our research strengths and identity to create momentum and applied success that makes a meaningful impact on society.

## **Goal 7: Elevate the national and global reputation and visibility of NC State.**

### **Executive Summary**

NC State has the opportunity to greatly amplify awareness of our strong brand and elevate our reputation to help achieve strategic goals and advance the university to unprecedented levels of success. To that end, we will establish and continuously promote an inclusive campuswide culture of teamwork, intentionality and awareness regarding strategies and tactics for enhancing our brand and reputation. We commit to leading and supporting universitywide systems and efforts that elevate regional, national and international awareness and impact of NC State's differentiators, competitive advantages and broad excellence. We will empower the campus community and key partners to be impactful brand champions. We will position NC State as a national and international leader in key areas of strength and opportunity that will continually advance the brand and reputation of the university and help achieve the goals of the strategic plan.

### **Exposition**

Institutional brand and reputation are among the most valuable assets held by any reputable organization. The corporate world has known for some time — and institutions of higher education are quickly learning — that strong brands push strong reputations and carry a great deal of tangible value. Consumers regularly choose recognized brands, and they will pay even more for a premium brand than for a mass-market brand. The same concept holds true in higher education: students, faculty, staff, donors, alumni and partners want to be associated with excellent brands and will

choose and invest in strong and well-known brands over weaker or unknown ones.

Simply put: Brand and reputation are integrally connected, which makes branding critical.

NC State's brand is a strategic asset with tangible value. It has proven effective in helping to improve rankings, attract the brightest students and best faculty, inspire record amounts of donor giving, enhance employee and alumni pride, and encourage community support. NC State's brand helps attract and secure mutually beneficial partnerships, sponsorships and agreements with private-sector businesses that want to be associated with the university. In addition, NC State's brand serves to focus the internal community on who we are, what we stand and strive for and how we interact with the world around us.

NC State made great strides in advancing our brand and reputation — especially across the region — throughout the last 10-year strategic plan. We are committed to building upon these successes to strategically and purposefully further our brand and reputation to a higher national and international level over the next 10 years.

There is a feeling among some NC State faculty, staff and students that NC State needs to increase its brand recognition to a level that matches our excellence — especially outside North Carolina. To address these challenges, storytelling and content focus must be among our key objectives.

Additionally, we are confident that an enhanced focus on and commitment to improving and promoting areas of excellence and research impact will elevate our national and international reputation. To accomplish this, we must invest in consistent, strategic, national and international brand and reputation campaigns and find every strategic and effective opportunity to tell the NC State brand story to our targeted publics.

Due to the tremendous work of our faculty, staff and students, the success of the Pathway to the Future strategic plan and brand-focused efforts over the last few years, NC State's reputation is stronger than ever. The university community is recognizing the power of a strong brand, and the external community is taking notice of an excellent and rising university. A broad range of feedback from across the institution makes it clear that the Wolfpack wants to continue aggressively enhancing NC State's brand and reputation to fuel the university's efforts to reach its potential and make a bigger impact on the world.

### **Looking Forward**

As a large, complex institution, we recognize that developing our strategic plan is one small step in the process of advancing meaningful change across the university. The goals laid out in this plan are ambitious, but they are supported by members of a mighty Pack who have never backed down from a challenge.

The next step after this strategic plan receives endorsement from the NC State Board of Trustees

is to develop a three-year implementation plan with annual updates that will allow us to continually assess our progress, using accompanying metrics, as we strategically pursue these goals.

Throughout the process, we are committed to transparency and accountability within our NC State community. To that end, we are developing a new strategic plan website — complete with a real-time dashboard — that will be regularly updated to inform our constituents of our progress while pursuing these goals.

Individuals with questions or comments regarding the strategic plan and its implementation can contact the strategic plan team at [strategic-planning@ncsu.edu](mailto:strategic-planning@ncsu.edu).

## Appendix 1

### Our Process

#### The Timeline

2019

- › August 20 — Planning process for creation of NC State’s next strategic plan launched.
- › September 3 — Leadership retreat held, with participants representing all of NC State.
- › December 12 — Strategic plan task forces announced.

2020

- › February 11 — Strategic plan task forces rosters and websites announced.
- › February - August — Task forces launched and charged. Task forces hold open meetings to gather input and prepare reports.
- › March — Strategic Planning Executive Steering Committee (SPESC) charged.
- › March 6 — Strategic planning presentation and discussion at Board of Visitors meeting.
- › August 17 — Task force reports due.\*
- › August 31 — Task force reports posted for community review and feedback to SPESC until September 21.
- › Fall:
  - › SPESC reviews task force reports and campus feedback to create proposed strategic plan goals.
  - › SPESC proposes revised vision and value statements.
- › December — Proposed goals, vision and values posted for community review and feedback.

2021

- › January/February — Listening sessions gather feedback on proposed vision, values and goals.
- › February/March — SPESC creates draft of strategic plan.
- › April — Strategic plan posted for community review and feedback.
- › April 16:
  - › Strategic plan presented to Board of Trustees for endorsement.
  - › New strategic plan website launched.

#### The Task Forces

Nine task forces were identified as a result of a daylong leadership retreat held in September 2019, with participants representing all of NC State. The task forces were composed of representatives from across campus and from various colleges and units, including faculty, staff, students and university leadership.

The nine task forces were:

- › Advancing Inclusion and Well-Being to Enhance Excellence
- › Continuing to Advance the Brand and Reputation of NC State
- › Envisaging the Next-Generation Land-Grant University

- > Graduating the Successful Student
- > Leading the Digital Transformation of Higher Education
- > Leveraging Partnerships to Advance Engagement
- > Pursuing Operational Excellence
- > Re-envisioning Lifelong Education and Credentialing
- > Strengthening Universitywide Interdisciplinarity

#### Listening Sessions

- > Open Listening Sessions
  - > Two sessions held for faculty
  - > Three sessions held for staff
  - > One session held for faculty and staff
  - > Four sessions held for students
- > Meetings with Campus Groups
  - > Faculty, Staff and Student Senates
  - > Graduate Student Association
  - > Deans, vice provosts and department heads
  - > University research and operations
  - > International programs and operations
  - > Engagement operations
  - > Diversity Advisory Committee
  - > Office of Finance and Administration leaders, business partners and human resources
  - > Office of Information Technology
  - > Lead communicators

#### **The Community**

Throughout the strategic planning process, the NC State community — including students, staff, faculty and university partners — was invited to provide input through online feedback, task force meetings and dedicated listening sessions to ensure the creation of a comprehensive strategic plan that represents the contributions and aspirations of the entire university. We offer sincere gratitude to the hundreds of individuals who participated in our strategic planning listening sessions and shaped our path forward by providing their invaluable feedback.