

# ASCEND

(verb) • to move upward  
• to rise to a higher level



2023-2028 University of Memphis Strategic Plan



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# WHEN THE WINDS OF CHANGE BLOW, SOME BUILD WALLS, OTHERS BUILD WINDMILLS.

— *Ancient Proverb*



Strong forces are reshaping higher education and creating challenges for universities. Some institutions perceive these emerging challenges as threats. The University of Memphis instead sees opportunities. We can either build walls to try and stop the winds of change that are blowing, or we can *build windmills to harness the winds* and direct their energies toward enhancing student success and advancing society. We choose to build windmills. With our Strategic Plan, the University of Memphis is choosing to align our strengths with the opportunities created by external disruptions to claim our place among *nationally recognized public research universities*.

We are confident in our prospects for success. An institution with humble beginnings, the University of Memphis possesses a gritty driven-by-doing spirit forged in a crucible of struggle. Our voyage has sometimes been difficult. Despite often encountering seemingly insurmountable obstacles, we have accomplished much and are proud of our strong forward momentum. However, we realize that we have more difficult things to accomplish to achieve our vision. We readily embrace the challenges ahead of us. To deliver on our vision, we will concentrate our energies and skills to realize opportunities. We fully intend to prevail in our quest for true distinction in scholarship and our pursuit to expand opportunities for all people.

Our Strategic Plan includes a mission, vision and goals that are woven together by eight principles. The mission defines our purpose. The vision describes our aspiration for the future. The seven goals describe our most important priorities for the next five years that will best position us to reach our vision. The eight principles describe elements that apply to most or all goals and are essential to goal attainment. These four components — mission, vision, goals and principles — provide the framework for our Strategic Plan. In developing our plan, we solicited the input of hundreds of constituents through 51 interviews, 19 listening sessions and two surveys. We have infused their yearnings and dreams for our fine University into our Strategic Plan.

Our sincere hope is that readers of our Strategic Plan will be inspired to join us on our journey to shape the next generation of leaders and scholars and to address society's most difficult challenges. Our Strategic Plan is an important beginning for our University. We are choosing our future. Our strategy is forward-leaning and intentional. Ultimately, our Strategic Plan is a *compact* we all have with each other to make the University of Memphis the best that it can be ... a University that we and our community, our state, our nation and our many supporters can continue to be proud of. We will need everyone to help us build the windmills necessary to harness the winds of change. Together, we can achieve the destiny that is beckoning the University of Memphis. **WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US.**

# MISSION

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*Produce well-rounded, successful graduates and cutting-edge research for the enrichment of our ever-changing society.*



Our mission describes *what* we do. We educate students to prepare them for productive pursuits, and we engage in research and scholarship that advances new knowledge. Although we successfully achieve many other things, education and research are what we are chartered to accomplish and must do well. While our mission remains relatively stable over time, the environment where we operate is ever-changing. This continual churning creates ceaseless challenges for achieving our mission. Currently, our educational environment is being roiled by increasing competition for a shrinking pool of prospective students; more resources needed to educate students unprepared intellectually and emotionally for college; rising costs of attendance that have outstripped inflation for decades; a growing proportion of students and their families who question the value of a college education (given the cost of a college education); and growing employer dissatisfaction with the qualifications of college graduates. Our research environment is also being shaken by increasing competition for shrinking external research funding; increasingly complex research issues that seem insoluble using standard approaches; mounting rules, regulations and restrictions in response to cyberterrorism and other threats; and, growing dissatisfaction by funding organizations with research output that is too narrow, lacking in relevance/impact and untethered from economic development considerations.

These shifting forces require us to adapt and, more importantly, present rich opportunities for mission advancement. *How* we educate students and *how* we investigate the world is rapidly progressing. The University of Memphis is fundamentally transforming our educational and research models with life and career success as the goal for our students and high societal impact as the goal for our research.

## Success-Driven Education.

The University of Memphis excels at educating our students. Our instructional model focuses on Student Success that extends beyond graduation to encompass great outcomes for our students in their careers and in their lives. To achieve this Student Success, we apply a three-step model, summarized as Access → Opportunities → Outcomes. Every action we take on behalf of students should impact at least one of these three dimensions of Student Success:

- **Access** means eliminating barriers to matriculation for students who meet our standards and creating easier pathways to our University that fit a student's situation and stage in life.
- **Opportunities** means we provide myriad opportunities for students to succeed by providing a full array of impactful programs, experiences, services, academic support and facilities that maximize student success.
- **Outcomes** means that our instruction and student experience result in career and life success for our students. By emphasizing practical education that promotes soft and life skills, we produce well-rounded, mature and confident citizens fully prepared for professional and life challenges.

## Impact-Driven Research Enterprise.

Our research model is being transformed through increasing focus on societal impact and strengthening our research enterprise. This involves several fundamental changes to how we approach research and scholarly work, including creating more substantive institutes and centers; more translational and interdisciplinary research; a greater emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering + Math), Healthcare and Business (STEM+H+B); a focus on Grand Challenge issues; increased investment in infrastructure; increasing partnerships with the private sector; and a stronger connection between our research and economic/community development.



# VISION

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*To become a nationally recognized public research university.*



Our vision describes our aspiration for the University of Memphis as we peer into the future. If things unfold as expected and we execute on our plan, our vision will become our *reality*.

While bold and ambitious, becoming a nationally recognized, leading public research university is also a logical and natural extension of the great strides we have made over the past 110 years. The long arc of our institution bends upward, marked by ever higher levels of recognition and performance. Our recent achievements, such as our R1 research designation and our athletic accomplishments, have given us national notice and significant momentum that we are leveraging.

We understand that ascending to the highest ranks of national public research universities is not a forgone conclusion. It will take a lot of work. And there will certainly be some dips in the road — setbacks that we must work through. We must be realistic optimists. We must understand our current situation. We cannot reach our destination if we are unclear about our starting position. This means owning up to who we are — both our strengths and weaknesses — and clearly seeing the challenges and opportunities before us. We must leverage our strengths and mitigate our weaknesses. We must be alert to opportunities and realize them to their fullest, particularly opportunities that align with our strengths. But we must also be ever watchful and prepared for external uncertainties. Success will entail calculated risk-taking. Risk assessment and risk management must be core competencies.

Of course, we must be clear-eyed about our competition. We should not fool ourselves into believing there is not a competitive dimension to our vision. Other universities are not standing still and there is only so much room at the top

of higher education. However, while we will certainly keep an eye on the competition, our focus is mostly on our own performance. Peer and aspirant universities serve a useful purpose as navigation aids that help us determine our position and where we must course-correct. And certainly, we welcome opportunities to collaborate with peer universities, particularly our sister institutions in Tennessee. Nevertheless, we do expect a level playing field: fair treatment and resourcing that reflects the value we provide to our students, community, state, region and society.

Rivalry in higher education makes our vision more than an aspiration. Increasing competition among universities makes ascending to the highest ranks a strategic imperative. A shake-out in higher education is occurring and accelerating. Smaller, undifferentiated and underfunded institutions are failing, merging or being absorbed (by more successful institutions). Regional universities will likely suffer disproportionately. Further complicating matters, what is required to be a leading research university is a moving target, requiring us to thoroughly rethink important elements of our University. Our Strategic Plan is reflective of this essential shift in mindset. Our plan proposes significant redesign and revamping of our enrollment and recruiting; academic instruction; student experience; research; and University operations and finance. Our objective is uplifting and differentiating the University of Memphis. We have no choice but to change. However, in forging a new course, we will stay true to ourselves and our principles. We will follow our own lights and do things the Tiger Way with integrity, hard work, courage, determination, kindness, discipline and teamwork. And we will continue to serve our community and the citizens of Tennessee as we rise to meet the opportunities that summon us.

## GOAL 1

### AGGRESSIVELY PROVIDE ACCESS.

*Grow enrollment while simultaneously improving student preparedness by pursuing a diversified and far-reaching recruiting strategy that emphasizes our University's compelling value proposition.*

*(Note: Most of the discussion under this goal refers to undergraduate enrollment and recruiting, but clearly some elements also pertain to graduate students. Growing and diversifying our graduate student population is pivotal to our overall enrollment and recruitment strategy. A separate sub-section on graduate enrollment and recruiting is included.)*

A confluence of factors creates challenges for our undergraduate enrollment and recruiting, including a drop-off in high school graduates driven by demographics; higher high school drop-out rates; a decreased college going-rate especially among males; and lower preparedness of high school graduates. These intersecting forces mean institutions of higher education are — and will continue to be — competing for a shrinking number of college-ready prospective students for the next five-plus years. The University of Memphis is currently dependent on a small geographic area for most of its students. Furthermore, our vision to become a leading national public research university requires that we raise our admissions standards, creating additional downward pressure on enrollment. The combination of these challenges requires us to pursue a broad-based, integrated, full-court-press, all-hands-on-deck effort to significantly enhance all elements of our enrollment and recruiting.

## Higher Enrollment and Admissions Standards.

Our objective is to significantly grow enrollment, through clearly setting recruitment goals backed by intentional efforts, while simultaneously raising admissions and academic standards. We are establishing specific University and college enrollment targets within the context of a broader push toward performance management. Eventually, we seek to increase our enrollment to the levels of aspirant universities. This transition will not happen quickly; admissions standards will be increased incrementally to reflect growth in the qualified applicant pool. Our immediate goal in the next one to two years is to stabilize enrollment considering the aforementioned downward forces.

to external forces (e.g., economic shifts), but also to ensure we are tapping every source of prospective students to grow enrollment and to reflect our nation's diversity. We are seeking to increase our student diversity by recruiting more non-local students; more students from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds; more international students; and more non-traditional students (e.g., adult, transfer, veteran, (degree) completer, rural, first-generation, disabled).

## Purposeful and Distinctive Recruitment & Marketing.

Our objective is to engage in purposeful, persistent and better-resourced recruiting of prospective students based on segmentation that tailors messaging and tactics to the needs and preferences of target segments and differentiates us from competitor universities so that the University of Memphis is included in prospective students' top choice set of universities. We are pursuing a comprehensive, integrated and data-driven recruitment campaign touching on all elements of recruiting. This means investment in recruiting to match the efforts of our competitors. The result will be more recruiters, recruiting events, marketing and advertising and greater involvement of our campus population in recruiting.

## Diversified Student Sourcing.

Our objective is to expand and diversify undergraduate enrollment through recruiting more heavily outside the Memphis area; tapping currently under-tapped student segments, such as transfers and adult learners; and integrating more seamlessly and innovatively with feeder institutions and programs, including our own University Schools. Diversification is needed to create a robust enrollment that is less vulnerable



## Improved Access and Affordability.

Our objective is to eliminate financial barriers for qualified students to matriculate and remain at the UofM. Affordability is a key (but often underappreciated) element of student success. At the University of Memphis, we have always excelled at making our education accessible and affordable. A high proportion of our students have typically come from low or modest socio-economic backgrounds, so we know how to serve these students. In our efforts to improve access and affordability, we consider much more than our tuition and fees. We also consider opportunity costs (of attendance), unmet need, financial literacy and accumulation of debt and ability to service that debt after graduation. We understand that post-graduation financial success — return on investment and social mobility — are important to our students. We are committed to ensuring the financial superiority of our value proposition relative to other educational or career options.

## Growing Graduate and Professional Enrollment.

Our objective is to grow graduate and professional enrollment — particularly in the STEM+H+B areas — so that our proportion of graduate students grows to about one third of total enrollment within five years. Attaining this growth requires a more intentional, multi-pronged and programmatic approach that significantly grows external research funding and better identifies and markets to prospective students, better informing them about our graduate opportunities and pathways.

## Increased UofM Global Enrollment.

Our objective is to leverage our online experience and capabilities to substantially grow both our fully online enrollment and our number of completely online programs — particularly in STEM+H+B fields of study. We have the infrastructure to scale up, so our emphasis is on adding programs and instructional capacity while preserving our high quality of instruction. We are maintaining our competitive edge through implementing advanced online innovations that provide advantages and benefits difficult to achieve in classroom settings. Our online focus is increasingly on nontraditional students and companies. With this in mind, we strive to design maximum flexibility into our online offerings. We are also regularly evaluating UofM Global to ensure we are achieving a mix of programs that meets student and employer needs.

## Differentiated Lambuth Offering.

Our objective is to create a contrasted academic and student experience at our Lambuth campus that provides a clear alternative to the Central campus and better leverages Lambuth to serve the citizens of western and middle Tennessee. The value proposition of Lambuth is compelling: a small campus experience with the resources and imprimatur of a major university. Lambuth offers an intimate and personalized learning alternative to the Central campus, while maintaining access to the advantages and benefits of the Central campus. We are striving to better market this *best-of-both-worlds* value proposition. Our longer-term strategy is to leverage Lambuth to better serve the educational markets in western and middle Tennessee beyond the Memphis metropolitan area.

## GOAL 2

### CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO SUCCEED.

*Foster an exciting, all-encompassing student experience, that encourages students to persevere, grow and thrive while laying the foundations for future success and creating an enriching lifelong bond with the University.*

At the University of Memphis, we provide an exciting, enriching and integrated student experience. We understand that for a student to get the full college experience, what happens outside the classroom must complement what happens inside the classroom to fully nurture a student's personal and professional growth. This is reflected in our students' expression of higher satisfaction and well-being than students at peer universities. We graduate mature, engaged students eager to take on life's challenges and demonstrate impact. In addition to success-driven academics, our aim is accomplished by providing a comprehensive, seamless, stimulating and enjoyable on-campus experience that is relational, not transactional.

## Student Success 2.0.

Student academic success has long been our focus at the University of Memphis. We go above and beyond to help students overcome challenges and to meet students where they are. This requires sensitivity to diverse student needs and tailored solutions. Our approach is hands-on and analytics driven. We have implemented a number of effective Student Academic Success programs and practices that have facilitated student academic excellence, including affinity groups that provide a sense of belonging within a globally diverse campus; incorporation of career skills in our curriculum and close monitoring of success indicators (e.g., class attendance) to allow proactive/early intervention. We are now ready to leverage our accomplishments to address other dimensions of student success. Increasingly, we are focusing our student success initiatives on broader and/or longer-term (e.g., beyond graduation) outcomes. Elements of this approach include:

**Retention, Persistence and Progression.** We are increasingly stressing, monitoring and rewarding precursors to graduation.

### **Operating Model Evaluation.**

We are evaluating all elements of our operating model that touch students to ensure our processes, practices and organizational structure fully align with Student Success.

### **Success Coaching.**

We are shifting from segmented counseling for specific needs (e.g., degree program advising, career placement) to an integrated approach focused on Student Success while at our University and after graduation.

### **Success Monitoring.**

Tracking student success while at our University and after graduation is critical to the effectiveness of our Student Success efforts.

## Second-to-None Safety & Security.

Safety and security are foundational to the student experience at the University of Memphis. We engage in ongoing dialogue with our campus population to understand their concerns and involve them in solution development. Our objective is to maintain campus safety through an integrated security regime that brings together police, our campus community, physical infrastructure, technology, excellent communications and proven protocols.





## Cohesive Campus Community.

Our objective is to create a cohesive, kind, supportive and welcoming community (inclusive of students from all campuses) in a way that focuses on the whole person and facilitates deep, long-lasting pride and engagement. The Tiger community we are building focuses on universal human values — such as integrity, kindness and courage — that serve to unite rather than divide us. It also seeks to imbue a sense of pride in our students through a deep appreciation of our storied history and through creating and passing down hallowed traditions. We seek to create a welcoming environment that accepts and celebrates our many differences in race, ethnicity, religion, culture and viewpoints. Our aim is a whole-person support system that accounts for physical, emotional and social health. This includes more deeply engaging alumni in our efforts.

## Expanded, High Quality and Affordable Housing.

With the objective of creating a more robust residential experience for more students, we are (or are facilitating) building or renovating higher-quality, affordable on or near campus apartment-style housing. Living on-campus/near campus strongly correlates with academic success and with more on-campus engagement while at a University and after graduation. To ensure long-term housing excellence, we are developing a balanced set of metrics for current and future housing that considers not only financial self-sustainment, but also housing quality, maintenance and student satisfaction.

## Diversified, Delicious, Convenient and Affordable Dining.

Our objective is to create diversified, affordable and available/convenient on-campus (and near-campus) dining options that align with student needs and preferences. This includes a strong commitment to quality, service, healthiness and cleanliness. We understand that dining is a vital element of a great student experience; it enhances the residential experience while also incenting commuting students to remain on campus and more deeply engage in academics and in University life.

## Rich and Exciting Campus Life.

Our objective is to improve, innovate, increase and integrate student activity offerings to foster more student engagement and satisfaction. The University of Memphis has long offered plentiful extracurricular activities with the aim of providing a full and enriching college experience for its students. This extracurricular emphasis is exemplified in the recently opened R. Brad Martin Student Wellness Center, a 78,000 square-foot state-of-the-art fitness and recreation facility. Building on our success, we are continuing to add and improve our spaces for student life and to further expand our broad array of student organizations and activities, including community service opportunities.

## Top Tier Athletics.

Our objective at the University of Memphis is to maintain a focus on, and investment in, intercollegiate athletics to ensure our beloved Tigers achieve the recognition they deserve, through participation in the top tier of college athletics. We understand that intercollegiate athletics are instrumental in a complete and exciting student experience; in attaining our vision of becoming a nationally recognized public research university; and in unifying the greater Memphis community. As such, we are leveraging our strong and sustained momentum to take the Tigers to ever-higher success, including exploring conference realignment options (e.g., positioning ourselves for inclusion in one of the top conferences in the country).

Intercollegiate sports are important in attracting and retaining students, instilling school pride, creating lasting relationships with our constituents, and achieving our vision of national recognition as a top public research University. We understand that our sports programs are important to national brand recognition and to garnering support — financial and otherwise — that will propel us to the top ranks of U.S. public research universities.

## Exciting Off-Campus Environs.

Memphis has an energetic and exciting city life. This includes wonderful arts, entertainment, sports, recreation, shopping and cuisine. Our objective is to integrate the many positive elements of Memphis city life into the broader student experience, with a strong emphasis on fostering a safe and exciting college scene to be found in areas near campus, thereby uplifting nearby neighborhoods and the broader community.



### **Tigers Around Town**

*In honor of the University's Centennial, the Alumni Association placed life-size tiger statues around the City of Memphis in January 2012. Each statue is uniquely decorated with artwork by Mid-South artists, students and alumni.*



### GOAL 3

#### OUTCOMES-FOCUSED ACADEMICS.

*Deliver a rigorous, practical, well-rounded and supportive academic experience through innovative programs and teaching methods that focus on student success and prepare our students for the workforce and graduate education.*

The ultimate payoff of higher education is measured by student outcomes; that is, what happens when a student graduates? Parents ask the question. Prospective and current students ask the question. Society asks the question. Thus, our approach to student success starts with us asking the same question. And student success is at the center of everything we do at the University of Memphis. Our objective is to produce graduates that are successful in their careers and in their lives. We launch our graduates with strong momentum so that they hit the ground running on their first day at work or at graduate school. However, successful outcomes and success do not end with the first job or a graduate degree. We strive to create lifelong learners who seek wisdom and love inquiry. This requires a broader and more enlightened perspective on education and working closely with employment partners to shape our academic programs.

#### Rigorous and Relevant Education.

The University of Memphis has a reputation for academic excellence. Our objective is to continually increase the quality of our education, measured through data-driven assessments of the learning and engagement that occurs while at the University of Memphis. Through innovative methods and high impact practices, we teach a rigorous, experiential and well-rounded curriculum that emphasizes both critical thinking and practical skills. We are applying a number of innovative pedagogies to elevate learning, such as flipped and interactive classrooms; active learning; and application-centric, experiential instruction.

#### High Impact Practices.

Our objective is to expand and deepen our implementation of High Impact Practices, which are experiential, skill-based methods proven to enhance learning as well as post-graduation success. One of the highest impact practices is internships, which are central to our model of practical education. Internships have always been a strength for the University of Memphis. Internships are important to career placement, especially in one's field of study. In addition to internships, a greater emphasis is being placed on the following High Impact Practices:

- Undergraduate Research
- Study Abroad
- Learning Communities
- Capstone Courses and Projects
- Collaborative (Semester-long) Assignments and Projects
- ePortfolios
- Service and Community-Based Learning

#### Outcomes/Workforce Focus.

Our objective is to prepare our students for the workforce, entrepreneurial ventures and graduate school, and perhaps more importantly, preparing them for lifelong professional and career success. But first, students must graduate, and do so in a timely manner. While our four-year and six-year graduation rates have improved, we seek additional improvements in these key areas as well as simultaneously decreasing the time to graduation. With a keen focus on long-term and durable outcomes, we value the high upward social mobility provided by a college education and the outstanding degree premiums and paybacks of a college degree.

#### Optimized Degree Program Mix and Emphasis.

Through data-driven and evidence-based assessment, our objective is to dynamically adjust the number and mix of our programs to align with changing workforce and graduate program needs and continuously improve the value of our degrees. We will continue to be a comprehensive University offering a broad range of degrees and a well-rounded education. However, increasing focus will be placed on program viability — using objective measures of program performance (e.g., credit hours produced, number of students, post-graduation outcomes) — to achieve a manageable number and mix of thriving degree programs. One aim is to increase the number of nationally recognized programs at the University of Memphis.



## Flexible Attendance Options.

Our objective is to offer flexible attendance options that address the challenges associated with traditional attendance models without compromising educational quality. We deliver instruction when, where and how it best fits a student's situation and learning style through a variety of delivery methods; including in-person, hybrid, online synchronous, online asynchronous and night/weekend classes. Regardless of the attendance option chosen by a student, the same proficiency standards are applied. We are sensitive to the needs of non-traditional students, such as adult learners, working professionals, degree completers and young working students.

## Expanded Offering of Non-Degree Credentials.

Our objective is to vastly expand our non-degree programs, working closely with corporate partners and students to ensure our offerings align with their needs. We understand that our students are entering an ever-changing working world where they will more frequently change jobs and even careers. These transitions often necessitate additional training, which means higher education is becoming a continuum requiring universities to provide a full range of instructional options that meet students where they are in their careers and in their lives.

## Teaching Soft & Life Skills.

At the University of Memphis, we are embedding into our academics the teaching of *soft* skills needed by employers as well as life skills needed to lead a full and enriching life. Our aim is to produce strong, mature and capable graduates eager and prepared to take on both career and life challenges. We understand that education is more than just providing students with discipline-specific knowledge and skills. In addition to embedding these skills into courses, we are investigating revamping and expanding courses in the core curriculum dedicated to instruction in soft and life skills (e.g., financial literacy, leadership).

## Enhanced Graduate and Professional Education.

The University of Memphis is enhancing its graduate and professional education, particularly in STEM+H+B. We understand that graduate education is increasingly a threshold requirement for many jobs, particularly management and leadership positions, as well as being important to cross-generational social mobility. And we understand that strong graduate programs provide benefits that flow down to our undergraduate programs. To sustain our intensive research, we also need to increase our research capacity, especially our population of doctoral students. Enhancing our graduate programs means we must evaluate our compensation and benefits packages for graduate students. We are also committed to enhancing graduate and professional student success and support. As part of our larger strategy to work more closely with external partners, we are also seeking to become a preferred supplier of master's degrees to companies and non-profits.

## Educational Ecosystem.

Longer-term, we will explore options around creating a preschool-to-PhD ecosystem that better integrates regional educational institutions to create a more efficient and effective education for citizens of our region. This would involve leveraging and expanding our University Schools as well as developing close partnerships with nearby technical schools and two-year schools.



## GOAL 4

### STRENGTHEN RESEARCH ENTERPRISE.

*Perform life-changing, interdisciplinary research and scholarship that is supported by world-class infrastructure and conducted by highly motivated researchers addressing the community and society's greatest challenges.*

The University of Memphis has steadily increased its research and scholarship profile. Our growing research strength has been acknowledged by our recent designation as a Carnegie R1 (first tier) doctoral research University engaged in *very high research activity* — a designation that has to be earned every three years. Reflecting the great team efforts by our faculty, staff and students, our R1 distinction requires continuing to meet or exceed a rigorous, objective set of metrics. Our R1 designation positions us to further improve our standing as a University and to achieve other important goals, including attracting high quality faculty and staff; expanding and deepening partnerships; and engaging in even higher levels of research. However, R1 is not a life-time distinction; it must continue to be earned. Thus, we cannot be complacent in our achievement. Instead, we must use our research momentum to create a stronger, self-sustaining research enterprise.

#### Increased and Enhanced Research Capacity.

Our objective is to increase and enhance our research capacity through thoughtful people strategies that focus on front-line researchers and support staff and external partnerships. Our efforts begin with recruiting and retaining junior and seasoned faculty, with strong research aptitude and passion, particularly in fields that generate significant external funding, such as STEM+H. Growth of our undergraduate programs is critical because more students enable hiring of more research faculty, particularly in the STEM fields. We are also growing our graduate research population. To catalyze this graduate student growth, we are evaluating and adjusting compensation and benefits for our graduate students. The production of humanity PhDs and professional degrees, one of the metrics that contributes to R1 status, is important. At the undergraduate level, we will offer more research opportunities to create excitement in conducting research through innovation and exploring new ideas, which will increase overall research capacity. Additional research capacity is also being accomplished through external partnerships — e.g., realizing opportunities to partner, share capacity, jointly invest and engage in other forms of collaboration.

#### Improved and Expanded Research Infrastructure.

Our objective is to enhance and more efficiently utilize (through consolidation and better coordination) existing infrastructure, while investing in additional capacity,

particularly for high impact/potential research focus areas. To these ends, we are modernizing laboratories, including installing advanced climate control where needed. Instrumentation is also being updated or replaced, accompanied by funded sustainment/sharing plans that include technical support, scheduled maintenance/replacement and shared access protocols. In some cases, research space is being renovated, reconfigured and consolidated to maximally support multi-uses and higher utilization. We are upgrading our data analytic capabilities through additions of advanced, well-supported, expandable, high-performance computing capacity supplemented by a well-resourced statistical consulting service.

#### Re-Engineered Research Processes.

Our objective is to create efficient, service-driven, compliant/secure research systems that maximize our research investment. To these ends, we are re-engineering our research processes — including pre-award, grant writing, post-award, hiring, procurement, accounting, compliance/reporting and legal counsel — to make them seamless, and more complementary and supportive of research endeavors. This includes upgrading the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure we have good protocols for protecting the rights and welfare of humans participating as subjects in the research (e.g., safeguarding subjects' data while allowing sharing of this data). These improvements are part of a broader effort, including clearer delineation of responsibility, to ensure all reporting and compliance requirements are met.



## Empowered and Enthused Leadership, Culture and Organization.

Our objective is to create a research culture and organization that supports, values and incentivizes consistent research accomplishment, especially collaborative, high-impact research. Creating such a culture begins with developing a shared organizational understanding of what our R1 designation means and entails. This includes a common appreciation for a much stronger emphasis on research funding, such as STEM+H, and the role of research funding in elevating *all* elements of the University. Patience will be required, especially in financial matters, as we transition to a more intensive and sustainable research model. It also requires much more interdisciplinary and interprofessional cooperation that we are catalyzing through a systemic approach that includes redesigned incentives, more recognition, organizational realignment, collaborative spaces for joint innovation and collaborative events and activities. Recognizing that not all fields have access to extramural funding, it is important to emphasize that a healthy research culture extends well beyond the STEM+H fields and external funding to include creative endeavors, such as art and literary works, inventions and publications; non-STEM+H scholars are important to translating research (e.g., through policy development) to maximize its impact. It is also important to recognize the importance of a strong and pervasive research culture to the sustainability of a strong student body. Overall, we are promoting an abundance (vs. zero-sum) mindset. We are committed to eliminating barriers to collaboration (e.g., sharing data while ensuring its protection) to facilitate alignment of unit goals with the University goals.

## Purposeful and Impactful Research Centers and Institutes.

Our objective is to better utilize centers and institutes to bring together University and external resources to address the most challenging research problems. Centers generally address narrower research areas, reside in a single college or school and require few dedicated resources. Institutes generally address wider interdisciplinary research areas and involve significant dedicated research support and infrastructure. Institutes will often host multiple centers (sometimes serving as an incubator of centers and spin-offs) and act as the public partner in Public-Private Partnerships. Both centers and institutes act as catalysts for research by connecting with community organizations and citizens or creating a channel for private industry to approach and engage our University. They bring together and leverage strengths from multiple departments or colleges.

## Key Research Focus Areas.

Our objective is to concentrate on high-impact interdisciplinary research that leverages current (or potential) University and local market strengths and that has important regional, state or national implications. Sometimes referred to as *Grand Challenge* areas by NIH, NSF and other federal funding agencies, these designated research areas address some of society's biggest problems and generate great positive impact on our world. To determine our focus areas (e.g., our *Grand Challenge* areas), we are analyzing external research funding allocation and trends. We are also creating a competency (e.g., a team and plan/approach) for generating interdisciplinary *Big Ideas*. Our aim is to identify five to seven cross-disciplinary, high-potential/growth areas that leverage our strengths, will attract generous external funding and fit our local and regional economic profile. In addition to standard state and federal funding, universities are increasingly relying on the private sector to fund key research initiatives; given our location, this may prove to be a great opportunity.





## Catalyzed Economic Development.

Our objective is to strengthen engagement with both the public and private sectors, so that the University of Memphis becomes a first resource for addressing critical social, economic, environmental and employment issues; thereby accelerating the economic growth of the Memphis metropolitan area, Tennessee and the Mid-South region. Achieving this objective begins with expanding and deepening local, state and regional partnerships with businesses, non-profits and government; with a focus on value creation resulting from both innovation and employment. We care about social mobility, especially the creation of high-skilled, well-paying, durable employment in our state and region. We intend to document our economic impact on both individuals and the economy. We are also increasing our involvement in attracting new industries and businesses to our region, working with local and state government and their corporate partners, such as utility providers; we aspire to provide on-going support to these new employers, including manufacturing assistance, workforce development and technology development/transfer. Our workforce development efforts will apply our University's deep expertise not only in STEM, but also in business and the social sciences. Our economic development efforts will also employ public-private partnerships and better leverage our deans.

## Enlarged and Diversified Funding.

Our objective is to increase and diversify extramural funding, particularly federal funding, but also funding from our state government and the private sector,

including non-profits and foundations and to direct that funding to areas of highest impact that will foster self-sustainment of our research enterprise. We are supplanting institutional research funding with diversified external funding, with an aim to reach typical R1 levels. We are aligning this funding approach with our research focus areas. We are looking for creative ways to defray costs and stretch research dollars through leasing, borrowing and contribution of equipment and services from external partners. To this end, we are also establishing better processes to review research spending to ensure a high benefit-to-cost ratio.

## Greater Research Visibility.

Our objective is to elevate our research profile through better external promotion that focuses on societal impact so that we gain the national and international recognition that we deserve for our research accomplishments. Increasing our research distinction begins with publicizing our research accomplishments, including raising expectations for faculty publishing. We must better relate our University's impact on our community, state, nation and the world. Given the importance of our University to the city, we will highlight research that directly benefits the community to showcase our important role as an urban research institution. We will liaise with state government officials so they understand the value our University produces for the state through our research. And we will engage our representatives in Washington, D.C., to inform our congressional delegation about returns on investments made in the University of Memphis and how we are advancing the federal agenda in the *Grand Challenge* areas.

## **GOAL 5**

### **RECRUIT, RETAIN, REWARD AND RECOGNIZE OUR PEOPLE.**

*Cultivate a respectful, supportive culture for our exceptional faculty and staff that recognizes and rewards excellence and success and that provides ample opportunities for personal growth, professional development, promotion and leadership.*

Our greatest asset at the University of Memphis is our people. We are proud of our highly committed, hard-working, passionate and engaged faculty and staff. We have achieved a lot together, including diversity that sets us apart from our peers. Faculty and staff are clearly critical to fulfilling our mission and we can reach our vision only if we get the people part of our strategy *right*. Over the past few years, we have asked a lot of our people. We made a strong and successful push for the R1 research designation while we were simultaneously being buffeted by the pandemic, which required fast and big changes across campus. Now, we must show acknowledgment and appreciation to our people for the sacrifices made. To this end, we are baselining, evaluating and revising all elements of our people model from recruiting to retention. There is much to be done. We understand the deep and intertwined nexus that exists among rewards, recognition, retention, workload, support and employment satisfaction. We are committed to ensuring strong progress in all seven dimensions (discussed below) of our people goal. Our objective is staff and faculty unity and pride that aligns with and propels the success of our students and our institution.

#### **Recruiting & Onboarding.**

Our goal is to attract and orient able, motivated and diverse faculty and staff through increased focus that results in needed capabilities in target disciplines and functions. For both staff and faculty, this means streamlining recruitment and hiring. This includes revising our onboarding process to make it more substantive, relevant, informative and welcoming. We also understand that our compensation and benefits packages must be more competitive. And we must be vigilant in creating fair hiring practices. To increase our pool of diverse candidates, we will be more purposeful in expanding the platforms where we announce our positions and in identifying and addressing impediments to hiring of candidates from historically underrepresented groups.

#### **Support.**

Our objective is to create a safe, collaborative and welcoming culture that is upheld by efficient processes, clear roles and responsibilities, excellent communications and modernized HR policies that maximize staff effectiveness and satisfaction. Creating this culture is a collective venture where faculty, staff and administration work closely together. It begins with ensuring campus safety (discussed under *Goal 2 – Create Opportunities to Succeed* and the *Safety and Security Principle*). However, it also entails a spirit of collegiality and collaboration that infuses our everyday interactions and instills institutional pride, with a strong emphasis on incentives that align with the cooperation we seek.

#### **Professional Development.**

Our objective is to actively facilitate and reward professional growth through more and better professional development. Understanding that professional development is important to enhancing people performance, teaching effectiveness, career advancement, leadership preparation and accomplishment of our broader strategic goals; we are investing more in professional development. We are engaging faculty and staff to gather input on what training is most needed. We will closely link professional development activities with objective criteria for evaluating its efficacy and will strive to provide equal professional development opportunities for all faculty and staff.



## Advancement & Leadership.

Our objective is to create well-defined paths for advancement and leadership. A top priority is the success of our staff and faculty supported by an advancement and leadership approach built around success coaching for both new and experienced faculty and staff. For staff, we are increasing cross-training to facilitate advancement. This involves addressing salary inconsistencies across campus and achieving a good balance between shared services and unit-specific resources. For faculty, our advancement approach focuses on our Promotion and Tenure (P&T) process. Our P&T standards need to be strengthened and raised to R1 levels. Additionally, we are developing a process to *periodically* review and update our P&T policies and criteria.

## Recognition.

Our objective is to maximize and realize opportunities to recognize and publicize faculty and staff's achievements and contributions. We are committed to celebrating the achievements of our faculty and staff. Such recognition should be directed both at individuals and teams/units that have exceeded expectations; it should involve recognition from leadership but also peer-to-peer recognition; and it should include publicity both within our University community and beyond. We are pursuing multiple avenues for better recognizing our people's accomplishments. However, our most important means of recognizing our great faculty and staff is to solicit their input and involve them (as we did with the Strategic Planning) in University decision-making.

## Rewards (Compensation & Benefits).

Our objective is to offer compensation and incentive packages that attract and retain high-performing personnel. In the coming years, we will work toward equalizing faculty's pay and benefits to peer university levels and staff's pay and benefits to local industry standards. We will conduct a salary study so that

we can make objective judgments and adjustments, determine funding sources/mechanisms and devise a new salary structure. Salary compression will be considered and addressed. A general principle of a new salary structure is more closely tying rewards to desired behaviors and performance. The result of these changes will be wider variations in salaries over time. Most of our efforts will be on equalizing compensation, but some improvements to benefits will also be explored. An important element of improving rewards will be educating and engaging staff and faculty in the fundamentals of funding the University so they can better assist in determining how to balance increased faculty and staff costs with other costs and match these costs with incoming funding (discussed further in *Goal 7 – Generate and Steward Financial Resources*).

## Retention.

Our objective is to create and upgrade programs and incentives to proactively retain well-performing faculty and staff. Retention is important to containing costs and preserving institutional knowledge. Because retention strongly correlates to faculty and staff satisfaction, we are committed to continuing (from our Strategic Planning effort) to regularly gauge satisfaction through surveys and listening sessions. If our efforts in recruiting, support, professional development, advancement and leadership and rewards and recognition are fruitful, retention should mostly take care of itself. However, we will continue to explore proactive retention-specific actions. And we will expedite implementation of measures especially important to retention. Good retention policies include respectful separation processes for staff and faculty for whom our University is not a good fit.



## GOAL 6

### EXEMPLIFY OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE.

*Optimize operational efficiency and effectiveness through the establishment of high standards and expectations to maximize resource utilization and to uphold accountability.*

To achieve our goals, our strategy must be operationalized (and ultimately monetized). This necessitates that operational excellence be a top priority. Operational Excellence means finding the right balance between efficiency (e.g., lowered costs) and effectiveness (e.g., good outcomes). This operational optimization requires the various elements of our Operating Model — processes, capabilities, infrastructure, organization, governance, leadership and culture — to be integrated and mutually reinforcing. It also requires excellent internal communications within and across units; maximal leverage of external partnerships; accountability-driven performance management that permeates our organization down to the individual; cooperative government relations; and enhanced marketing and external communications.

#### Process Excellence.

Our objective is to re-engineer current processes, policies and procedures to emphasize service commitment and service metrics so that we collaboratively, consistently and seamlessly meet or exceed customer/end-user requirements and objectives. Rethinking our Operating Model best begins with re-engineering our processes, which drive (or at least heavily influence) the other elements of our Operating Model. A comprehensive review of all policies and procedures is being performed that is gathering constituent input to prioritize needs and collect (re)design ideas.

#### Capabilities.

Our objective is to dynamically optimize the number of personnel and skilling to properly resource functions and programs, taking into consideration the contributions of process improvement, current/future technologies and external partners and redeploying freed-up resources to areas of highest need/impact. Mapping *to-be* processes as part of process re-engineering provides a good sense of the positions and skilling required to accomplish our objectives. We are seeking the right portfolio of faculty and staff to deliver our instructional and research missions — the right numbers of people, organized and distributed correctly across functions/processes and properly skilled and equipped.

#### Infrastructure (both physical and IT).

Our objective is to substantively improve infrastructure through re-engineered, long-range, data-driven and collaborative capital planning that directs resources to areas of highest need and/or impact and better supports our people and processes.

**Physical Infrastructure.** Currently, the University of Memphis has the oldest building inventory among Tennessee's public institutions of higher education, with some buildings *far past* their useful life, making maintenance and utilities costly. Additionally, we are experiencing a shortage of space; many teaching and research spaces are not functionally equipped to modern standards; and we have a huge and growing backlog of deferred maintenance.

**IT Infrastructure (and IT services)** are also trending downward. Systems are aging and fragmented, with many (and increasing numbers of) bolt-ons, manual processes and workarounds. Additionally, it is often increasingly difficult to determine where data resides, how to access it and whether it is current or accurate. Emphases must be on more digitalization and better leveraging of technology that is backed by a strong business case.



## Organization.

Our objective is to better align our organization structure and responsibilities with institutional priorities. Our task is to find an organizational structure that best fits our new strategy and the modified supporting process, capability and infrastructure dimensions of our improved Operating Model and offers adaptability to ever-changing conditions and emergent priorities. A new organizational structure should focus on catalyzing interdisciplinary collaboration and consider more balance in the size of colleges and schools. In some cases, distributed responsibilities may need to be (re)consolidated; in other cases, responsibilities may need to be redistributed to where they most logically belong.

## Governance.

Our objective is to realize the full potential of self-governance by reducing legacy regulation. Self-governance is an institutional strength, which has provided needed flexibility and nimbleness. The Board of Trustees was well-designed with governance best practices in mind. Board members are committed and capable. They understand and respect their role and their boundaries. However, the full potential of the Board is not being realized. A legacy of (over)regulation from the former Board of Regents era impedes full self-governance.

## Leadership & Culture.

Our objective is to foster an open, trust-based, collaborative culture as a prerequisite for operational excellence. Every day, each member of our campus community should live our mission, vision and principles. As discussed in the “Organization Culture” principle in the *Principles* section of the Strategic Plan,

we seek to cultivate an organizational culture built on pillars of integrity, diversity and inclusion, collaboration, accountability, resilience, pride (in our achievements), innovation, technology-savviness, responsiveness and excellent communications. Following the path of our strategic planning, with its surveys and listening sessions, we are continuing to foster openness and a participatory working environment.

## Partnerships.

Our objective is to identify objectives and functions that would best be accomplished through external collaboration and then find, vet and work with the most capable partners. Collaboration is a key University principle. External partnerships often offer lower costs, better results or both. They provide great opportunities to accelerate and/or amplify our impact. Partnerships options range from simple vendor-customer arrangements to joint ventures. It is important that we develop an evaluative framework to determine the optimal partnership model for various functions, objectives or activities that provides the best results for us and our partners. We must choose the most operationally excellent option based on well-defined, objective criteria. This requires strong alignment of objectives and the capability to leverage the respective strengths of each partner. We have a good track record of establishing mutually beneficial collaborations but need to continue to improve our array of partnership competencies, including negotiation skills, contract administration, business case development and supply chain management. Our increased partnering includes expansion of our work with the community.

## Performance Management.

Our objective is to achieve accountability through clear, quantified and collaborative definition of objectives and associated actions and through continuous and transparent performance monitoring. Performance management necessitates translation of the Strategic Plan to actions, metrics and targets and extension of Strategic Planning to the colleges, schools and major units. A University action plan is being developed that describes actions for all goals and supporting objectives with associated timelines, assignment of responsibility, (sometimes) resource estimates and metrics affected. For each goal, metrics (also known as Key Performance Indicators, or KPIs) and annual targets for those metrics are being developed. This will require baselining the KPIs and some benchmarking to establish reasonable targets. A plan for periodically reporting progress against the action plan and KPIs will be developed that establishes a reporting format, periodicities, communications channels, intended audiences and information requirements.

## Government Relations.

We appreciate the great support we receive from both state and local governments in the jurisdictions where we operate. Our objective is to foster stronger collaborative relationships with our local, state and federal governments that uplift our University, community, state, region and nation. To that end, we are establishing a more cogent and comprehensive public policy strategy, increasing our visibility and more constructively engaging government at all levels and in all branches. We are also engaged in an internal educational campaign to promote a much broader organizational understanding of the important role played by government, especially our state government, in the health of our University and how we need to work with government to achieve mutually beneficial goals.

## Marketing & Communications.

Our objective is to enhance marketing and communications to improve our visibility, to strengthen our reputation and to better support recruiting and advancement. Overall, our marketing and external communications function has supported the University's aims in most areas. However, there are areas for improvement that center on making our marketing and external communications more modern, relevant and distinctive; especially in recruiting and advancement. We understand that significantly more resources will be needed to update our marketing, expand our marketing channels (especially social media) and increase the volume of communications through those channels.



### Blue Fridays

*Every Friday, UofM students, faculty, staff, alumni and supporters are encouraged to wear Tiger Blue, no matter where they are. But remember, it's not just blue. It's got to be Tiger blue! If the weather is cooperating, the fountain on campus also turns blue on Fridays.*



## GOAL 7

### GENERATE AND STEWARD FINANCIAL RESOURCES.

*Increase funding and improve resource allocation to fuel growth through better alignment of internal priorities and external funding opportunities, through funding diversification and through application of financial best practices.*

Becoming a national public research university will require significantly more funding. Our current vision is bigger than our current budget, which is significantly below aspirant R1 universities' budgets — a result of lower tuition revenues, less state funding (than the average R1 university) and higher student support needs. Our expansive vision requires monetizing our strategy so that we generate higher recurring revenues that we can reinvest to finance our goals and to further increase our funding. Our aim is to increase our funding to levels commensurate with other nationally recognized public research (R1) universities.

#### Tuition & Fees.

Our objective is to work with the state to balance increases in tuition and fees with other institutional priorities, taking into consideration the broader portfolio of revenue streams, enrollment goals, the cost of attendance compared to competitive institutions and the value of a UofM degree. Current enrollment and recruitment pressures and rising academic standards will likely limit the potential of tuition and fees, *as currently structured*, to boost funding in the short-term.

#### State Government Funding.

Our objective is to maximize state funding through better understanding of, and alignment with, metrics in the state's funding formulas. Currently, the State of Tennessee directly provides about 30% of our total funding. We appreciate this generous funding, which is above the national average for universities. However, for planning purposes, our aim is to achieve more year-to-year stability in state funding. A second aim is to effect an increase in state funding to median R1 state levels.

#### Support from Memphis and Surrounding Region.

Our objective is to work closely with the City of Memphis, Shelby/Jackson/Madison County and other local and regional entities to increase and sustain community support for our University. The University of Memphis is the *City's University*. We are

thankful for the funding and in-kind support we have received from the communities where we reside, most notably the use of sports venues. As stated elsewhere in the Strategic Plan, our goal is to continue to expand and deepen our partnerships with local governments and with community organizations to improve our community. Our aim is to continue to build on our success in winning community grants and securing community-sponsored research.

#### External Research Funding.

Our objective is to maximize extramural research funding, especially federal funding (e.g., NSF, NIH), but to also seek more support from local government, corporations, foundations and non-profits and better align internal research investment with external funding priorities. External Research Funding is discussed in *Goal 4 – Strengthen Research Enterprise*.

#### Development.

Our objective is to better inform, engage and marshal our supporters — especially alumni and local companies — to achieve lasting and mutually beneficial stakeholder affiliation with the University of Memphis. Our development efforts have improved and are improving, but much more and faster improvement is needed. We must achieve higher, sustained annual giving, especially to fund many more need-based scholarships and many more endowed chairs and professorships in furtherance of our important affordability and faculty compensation objectives.



## Revenue Diversification.

Our objective is to seek new sources of revenue that provide funding diversification and create new opportunities for our graduates, research, partners and stakeholders. New sources of revenue have the potential of providing significant funding to the University and have the advantage of lowering our funding risks through portfolio diversification. Particularly appealing are new revenue streams that also help us meet other non-revenue goals, such as providing internships.

## Capturing Internal Efficiencies.

Our objective is to perform a comprehensive and periodic review of existing programs to identify and realize efficiencies to allow redeployment of resources to higher need/impact opportunities. *Goal 6 – Exemplify Operational Excellence* discussed several objectives and actions that have the potential to capture efficiencies, but many of these initiatives and activities require time and sometimes investment to produce material results. *Goal 2 – Create Opportunities to Succeed* included an objective “Optimized Degree Program Mix and Emphasis” that provides the best opportunity to quickly free up substantial funding by rationalizing the University’s portfolio of degree programs to eliminate underperforming, undersubscribed degree programs. Over the long-term, rising academic standards will likely result in lower student support costs, further releasing funds for reallocation.

## Resource Allocation Model.

Our objective is to overhaul the resource allocation model to better align provision of funds with external funding drivers and to maximize transparency, fiscal discipline, consistency, accountability and performance. Our current budgeting model has served useful purposes in providing needed transparency around colleges’ performance and forcing tough discussion about resource allocation. However, it has not achieved its primary objectives of a significant reallocation of resources (to areas of highest impact) and advancing financial accountability. The current model also does not align well with the state’s outcomes-based funding metrics (or more generally with external drivers — e.g., workforce demands), so that boosted state funding resulting from a college’s actions do not flow through (even partially) to the college.

## Fiscal Discipline.

Our objective is to continue to adopt best practices in the financial management of our University. Key future financial objectives are 1) to align our financial management actions with the University’s strategy and 2) to infuse financial discipline (e.g., an emphasis on ROI) throughout campus. Important principles of fiscal discipline include transparency, accountability and consistency. Education is essential. Administrators, faculty and staff require training on the fundamentals of University financing, including understanding the basics of outcome-based funding. Training should also include instruction in the essentials of business case development, including providing University-specific financial/budgeting tools and templates.

# PRINCIPLES

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*Our Strategic Plan incorporates eight Principles that apply to most or all Goals. These Principles define foundational elements essential to accomplishment of our Goals and accordingly find expression throughout the Strategic Plan. The Principles are the **threads** binding together our Strategic Plan.*

## **Enhanced Safety and Security.**

*Provide a safe and secure environment by investing in infrastructure and programs that focus on community well-being and on enhancing the complete campus experience.*

Our top priority at the University of Memphis is physical safety and security. (This includes the security of our information systems and pedestrian safety.) The University of Memphis has earned accolades for our efforts to protect our campus, but we realize more hard work is needed to earn and keep the confidence of our on-campus community. We understand that a reasonable sense of physical safety and security is foundational to student success and the overall well-being of our on-campus population. Our aim is for students to *always* feel safe *anywhere* on campus. We are committed to making additional and on-going investments in measures to further safeguard our campus. This includes adoption of best practices and protocols, implementation of new proven technologies and timely and substantive communications.

## **Whole-Person Student Success and Support.**

*Walk alongside students in their academic, social and emotional journey by offering excellent and engaging programs, experiences, opportunities and facilities that maximize student success.*

We put students first at the University of Memphis. Our University is not successful if our undergraduate and graduate students are not successful. We take a broad view of student success, which extends beyond academic success to career success and life success. We have been graduating students for more than 100 years and know what is needed to succeed in a career and in life. We produce mature, workforce-ready, well-rounded and resilient graduates that are eager to undertake career and life challenges. Achieving such success requires that we work closely with students and accompany them on their journey while at our University. We provide more than just academic support but also help students with non-academic challenges — financial, emotional, social — that they might be

facing. Our holistic approach is practical and ensures that all elements of the University experience are aligned, integrated and well-executed to provide the seamless support needed to maximize student success.

## **Improved Access and Affordability.**

*Improve access and affordability for students that meet our admissions standards through intentional efforts that focus on unmet financial need and minimize postgraduation debt burdens.*

Access and Affordability is a key element of our value proposition that requires University-wide efforts to sustain. Access means we seek to minimize financial (and other) barriers to matriculation of students that meet our admissions standards. Financial hurdles should not prevent qualified students from attending the University of Memphis. Access also means creating easier pathways to our University that fit a student's situation and stage in life.

Affordability means that we actively work to minimize a student's unmet financial need and post-graduation debt. Our aim is to maximize financial resources available to needy students, including development of innovative sources of funding. Affordability also means that we must increase a degree's return on investment by focusing on not only a degree's costs but also a degree's benefits (e.g., post-graduation earnings).

## **Intentional UofM-Community Partnership.**

*Maximize and leverage the strong bond between the University and the community so that we remain forever a source of pride in the region and the state.*

The University of Memphis and local communities we have served for over 110 years take great pride in our mutual bond. Our relationship is intentional and a great source of strength. The University of Memphis is a critically important civic institution that has served as an economic engine for Memphis and surrounding communities. This includes providing a skilled workforce for local employers, who have long been faithful partners with us. The community's support and buy-in



has allowed our University to thrive. We are thankful for this backing. We appreciate the many positive attributes of the community where we are situated: its rich history; its storied civil rights tradition; its wonderful music, arts, entertainment and cuisine; its great sports teams; its central location and accessibility; and its affordability. We embrace our community. Our aim is to better leverage our community's positive attributes to uplift and unite our University, community and local stakeholders. We are increasingly looking for opportunities to further collaborate, particularly with an eye to creating a stronger and more expansive mutual support network within our region and greater Tennessee.

### **Next-Generation Diversity & Inclusion.**

*Support an inclusive campus environment that reflects cultural competency, societal dynamics and social opportunities, so that we serve the public good.*

The University of Memphis has been a trailblazer in advancing diversity and inclusion. We have a diverse student and faculty population that is the envy of our peers. Our campus culture is kind and welcoming. We are proud of the great progress we have made since our campus was first integrated by the Memphis State Eight in 1959. Our aim is to continue to be in the vanguard of diversity and inclusion. Our continued emphasis will be on those things that unite rather than divide us ... a focus on our common humanity and respect for the dignity of all people. We understand that continued progress will require a more sophisticated and broader perspective on diversity and inclusion. Our goal to be a top national university will result in even greater diversity as we *cast a wider net* for students, faculty and staff. Our future entails greater geographic, ethnic and cultural diversity. Our proportion of non-traditional students — e.g., transfers, adult learners, veterans, rural students — will increase. Our intention is to better highlight and leverage our diversity. However, we also are ever mindful that increased diversity presents challenges. We must better tailor our services to more varied student needs. And we must develop a deeper cultural competency that includes tolerance of viewpoint diversity that results from increased demographic and geographic diversity.

### **Increased Collaboration.**

*Encourage and incent an institutional collaborative spirit to expand workforce development opportunities, our research portfolio and our community engagement.*

Collaboration is critical to amplifying and accelerating our impact and to expanding our geographic footprint. *We can do more together.*

We are committed to identifying, cultivating and maximizing partnerships both within the University and beyond the University (with external partners). Traditionally, our University has excelled at external collaboration; however, we realize that there is much untapped potential in both our existing relationships and in expanding our collaborations to new entities, including other universities in both the U.S. and abroad. Internally, we are committed to increased cooperation across our institution. Our intent is to implement a more systemic approach that incents and catalyzes working together. Our future approach will include assessments of organization structure, better leveraging deans and optimal distribution of functions. Our hope is that the Strategic Plan will unify our constituents through promoting a common understanding of our priorities and through better defining our shared culture.

### **Strict Accountability.**

*Personify accountability, trustworthiness and transparency by establishing high standards, by developing rigorous processes and by closely monitoring progress so that an expectation of excellence is instilled in our campus community.*

All staff and faculty play an important role in advancing the goals of the University. Accountability, properly understood and implemented, is a powerful tool for such advancement. Accountability means individuals, units and even ad hoc implementation teams at the University of Memphis take responsibility for their actions in achieving our co-developed goals. Accountability necessarily involves consequences for actions. Most often, these consequences involve (re) allocation of resources to areas of highest impact. However, for accountability to work in advancing the University, practices and processes must be agreed upon and followed. Well-defined goals should be collaboratively set. Timelines for goal achievement are usually needed. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly established. Resources must be allocated and provided when scheduled/needed. A system for monitoring and communicating progress is a necessity. Finally, consequences for success (and failure) must be articulated at the outset. It is also important that a cultural discipline be established around accountability, especially application of project/program management best practices and tools; this includes a strong focus on return on investment.

### **Distinct Organizational Culture and Identity.**

*Cultivate organizational identity around pillars of resilience, pride in our achievements, innovation and entrepreneurship, technology-savviness, responsiveness and excellent communications.*

The University of Memphis has a distinct culture and identity. We know who we are and we are committed to doing things the *Tiger Way*. In addition to our emphases on accountability, collaboration and diversity and inclusion (discussed above), our organizational culture is defined by seven additional pillars: integrity, resilience, pride, innovation, technology-savviness, responsiveness and excellent communications.

**Integrity** defines our moral being, characterized by honesty, truthfulness and respect.

**Resilience** refers to our can-do work ethic ... a certain driven-by-doing fighting spirit and grittiness that is infused in everything we do and that we strive to inculcate in our students.

**Pride** refers to our celebration of our achievements and a distinct institutional loyalty, camaraderie, exuberance and commitment that characterizes our campus environment.

**Innovation** (and entrepreneurship) are evidenced in our constant quest to do things better and more efficiently; to lean into creativity; and to take calculated risks.

**Technology-savviness** means we are ever focused on identifying and implementing cost-effective and adaptive technologies that enhance our efficiency, impact, reach and connectedness.

**Responsiveness** is defined by a proactive commitment to work positively and expeditiously with other stakeholders and units to address issues and to advance the University.

**Excellent Communications** are transparent, honest, clear, timely and substantive.



### **Sacred UofM Plaque**

*To get a step ahead in college success, be sure never to step on the UofM plaque located at the front steps of the Administration Building. It is considered bad luck if you step on this sacred symbol of our institution. So, always watch your step when you're near this area of campus.*

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The University of Memphis followed a rigorous and inclusive approach to develop its Strategic Plan. A team, comprised of 11 representatives of our constituencies, led the strategic planning effort, which was launched with the following charter:

To develop a compelling, bold, stakeholder-driven, five-year Strategic Plan that builds on our current strengths and focuses on areas where we are best positioned to advance resulting in multi-dimensional approaches to achieving transformational goals in areas vital to our future.

***The seven-month process consisted of three overlapping phases:***

## PHASE 1: Situation Analysis (AUGUST – OCTOBER 2022).

The Situation Analysis is an in-depth assessment of our University that provided a well-researched, fact-driven foundation for strategic planning. Six methods were employed to provide input to the Situation Analysis:

- **Interviews.** Fifty-one in-depth interviews, averaging an hour and 20 minutes, were conducted with leaders of the University's constituencies.
- **Listening Sessions.** Nineteen listening sessions were conducted with University constituencies. More than 250 constituents participated.
- **Survey.** We disseminated a survey to allow any constituent to provide input who was not interviewed or could not attend a listening session; 575 constituents participated.
- **Quantitative Analysis.** Extensive quantitative analysis — mostly benchmarking against comparison groups — was performed; 90+ graphs were developed and analyzed.
- **Document Review.** Over 100 documents were reviewed for content relevant to assessing the University and to writing our strategic plan.
- **Secondary Research** was conducted in selected other areas. This included collecting and analyzing other universities' strategic plans, researching Tennessee's funding formulas and assessing Advancement's "giving market."

*Inputs were synthesized into findings and conclusions, using the SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) framework and were incorporated into a comprehensive Situation Analysis describing the University's current situation.*

## PHASE 2: Development of Mission, Vision, Goals and Principles

(OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2022).

Using the Situation Analysis as a reference, the Strategic Planning team was led through a series of exercises and workshops to develop the Mission, Vision, Goals and Principles (MVGP) that provided the framework for writing the strategic plan. The team also provided input on the sub-goals and actions required to implement the strategic plan's goals and explanatory elements of the strategic plan's principles. A survey seeking feedback on the Mission, Vision, Goals and Principles (MVGP) was disseminated to our constituents. More than 1,100 constituents responded. Based on their input, the MVGP was revised.

## PHASE 3: Strategic Plan Development

(NOVEMBER 2022 – MARCH 2023).

Using the MVGP, the Situation Analysis and other input, drafts of the strategic plan were created and disseminated to stakeholders for their review and feedback. This input was considered and reconciled, resulting in a finalized Strategic Plan that was approved by the Board of Trustees at its March 1, 2023, Board meeting.

**Note:** *Strategic Plan Operationalization (Phase 4) will be developed after the Strategic Plan is approved by the Board of Trustees. This operationalization consists of 1) development of a detailed University Action Plan; 2) formulation of University Key Performance Indicators (e.g., metrics), or KPIs, with annual targets; and 3) creation of Unit Plans that align with and support the University's Strategy. These documents will support, but are separate from, the Strategic Plan.*