

UVA 2030 Strategic Plan Analysis

The University of Virginia has been changing rapidly over the past few decades, growing quickly from its roots as a Southern and regional institution to a diverse and world-renowned university. At the heart of the University's most recent growth is its "2030 UVA Strategic Plan," agreed upon by the faculty senate in 2013. The project was announced at the bicentennial of the University outlines UVA's goal to become the leading public university in the U.S. by the year 2030. To accomplish this difficult and impressive feat, the plan outlines four strategic goals and ten key initiatives the university is to undertake and complete at the latest by 2030. At the heart of all the goals and initiatives is the university's mission statement to become a "great and good" university, a phrase often spoken by former University President Jim Ryan.

To understand the goals and alignment of the 2030 UVA Strategic Plan, the meaning of a "great and good" university must first be understood. While great and good are often used as synonyms, their meanings in this context reflect two unique yet still intertwined goals the university is trying to accomplish. A university that is great is one which is acclaimed and distinguished in its designated fields of study, its professional staff, and its student body. Other universities, corporations, and institutions should be able to recognize a degree from a great university as one which holds immense weight. Students who graduate from a great university understand not just their field of study deeply, but also the context around the field and the greater implications of it.

This fact relates to what makes a university good: the establishment and active maintenance of a beneficial and productive relationship with the community at large. In the case of UVA, the community can range from interacting with just the local Charlottesville area, to promoting projects across the entire nation and even the world. A good university is one that teaches, studies, and conducts research not just because it can, but also because it promotes a positive society. Therefore, students, faculty, and administrators at a good university must not only ask whether a project can be undertaken, but whether it should be. Most universities conduct research and complete projects, but a good university ensures that the research and projects it undertakes benefit its community.

Combining these two core values, the university seeks to undertake projects which are both great and good. These types of projects should promote the university's academic and professional standing while also benefiting the broader community. An example of such a project would be the establishment and construction of a new research laboratory for emerging fields such as computer science or biomedical engineering. State-of-the-art research labs promote the University's greatness by allowing for impressive and notable research to be conducted at the university, while also promoting the education of undergraduate students and allowing access to modern materials. Research labs also promote the University's goodness by establishing a location for the creation of community-beneficial items ranging from life-saving medications to more efficient computer algorithms to speed up users' computers.

The four strategic goals provide a more concrete method of implementing the University's mission statement to be both great and good. Of these four strategic goals, enabling

discoveries that enrich and improve lives is the most resonant one to personal, academic, and professional experiences. The enabling discovery goal outlines four subgoals: promoting interdisciplinary work, becoming an international leader in research, shedding new light on profound questions, and approaching learning as an opportunity for discovery.

In personal terms, I have always been very focused on interdisciplinary work. I find exploring the intersection between fields which, at the surface level, seem unrelated, to be fascinating. I am often reminded of a professor at UVA's advice, that if you want to do something extraordinary, there are two paths: to be the best at one specific thing or be very good at the intersection of two different things. The second path is the much more reliable, and often more helpful and inspiring, option that I wish to accomplish. It also connects to the subgoal of becoming an international leader in research, as more and more research in the present day is interdisciplinary.

The enriching lives strategic goal, and its associated subgoals, also relate to the University's key initiatives. In particular, the second key initiative, "Citizen-Leaders for the 21st Century" relates to the not just the strategic goal, but also the University's values of being great and good. The three parts of the citizen-leader initiative are the implantation of a two-year on-Grounds housing program, the encouragement for all students to participate in a study-abroad program, and the creation of co-curricular opportunities to connect to the community and inspire life in public service. Each of these three pillars solves an ongoing issue facing the University's undergraduate program.

First, the establishment of more University-owned residential communities, and the implementation of a two-year on-Grounds residency program, encourages the formation of bonds to the University and the community. Currently, many undergraduates are forced into living in far away or disconnected apartments after only a single year of college. They lose the opportunity to make new connections with other students or the community due to both a physical and metaphorical distance from the University community. Second, the implementation of international education programs, such as study-abroad for a semester, encourages students to obtain diverse and previously unknown perspectives in their fields of study. It also establishes the University as a global leader and connects the University with the international community.

Finally, preparing undergraduates for a life of public service ensures that the University can forward its commitment to being not just great, but also good. Public service careers are some of the most vital positions to the stability and betterment of lives in the nation. Despite this, public service careers are often underappreciated or undercompensated, which discourages graduates from working in them. Thus, aiding students who wish to work in these programs helps the University be good as it gives back to the community. Financial incentives, such as loan forgiveness, are especially effective.

The strategic goals and key initiatives are important to discuss to lay the foundations for improving the University. However, many of these goals and initiatives will require serious capital investment to see their fullest potential. Thus, understanding the University's future placement of funds is critical for any sort of major project design and investment. The best way to predict the University's future investments over the next five years is, unsurprisingly, to look at its most recent past investments. Major recent investments include the Data Science building

to support the School of Data Science, the renovation of Alderman (Shannon) Library, the construction of the Contemplative Commons, the future construction of a new Arts Grounds, and the construction of new student housing along Brandon Avenue. These investments also overlap with other key initiatives the University has outlined.

From these investments, the University's future funding and capital investment plans can be inferred. Facilities and newly designed spaces which support interdisciplinary and co-curricular research and activities are the most likely to be supported. Spaces which promote interactions and discussions between students of different majors and backgrounds will be encouraged. An example of this could be a building which promotes research into interdisciplinary majors, such as Cognitive Science, Neuroscience, or Global Studies. Classes from different departments will be scheduled to take place in these interdisciplinary buildings to encourage discussion between majors.

There should also be up to date research laboratories where state-of-the-art research can occur. This not only helps the University be great by allowing for the creation of new papers but also helps the University be good by promoting new developments which can help the community. These new facilities will be constructed not just around the main University campus in Charlottesville, but also around the Commonwealth and the nation. New infrastructure in the University's more distant campuses in places like Wise and Northern Virginia. Buildings such as new hospitals will be constructed across the commonwealth to serve the University's mission to be good.

Finally, it is important to consider how the success of these new capital projects can be evaluated. Key stakeholders such as students and large donors will wish to see the plans and progress of the projects and ensure they are on track for completion. Before the start of the project, a timeline should be formulated by the University and its associates that outlines the competition dates for key parts of the project. For example, a project involving the construction of a new research lab should outline when the blueprints must be drafted by, when construction should begin, when construction should be completed, and when the building will be officially opened to the public. Third-party, independent consultants and advisors should be used to evaluate the success of the project to ensure minimal bias. Performance reviews will be conducted to ensure the project is on time, and which parts of the project are behind.

The results of these performance reviews and outlines should be posted publicly for all stakeholders to view. The University website provides a location for information for easily accessible information. The links to project information should be sent out to students, faculty, and alumni in newsletters so they are aware of the location of the project files. For key donors and large stakeholders, in-person invitational meetings can be held to give more regular and formal updates. If the construction project takes place on Grounds, updates should be given around the location of construction to ensure minimal interruption to usual student behavior. If all these principles are upheld, the University's strategic goals and key initiatives can be fulfilled to ensure the University can be both great and good.