Find your place
Here

Our shared vision for WashU’s next decade
We’re proud of WashU and the lives we change through our mission. So why engage in a strategic planning process? We believe we have the potential, and the obligation, to drive even greater impact in our research, education, and patient care—for our region, our nation, and our world.

Collaboration is key to unlocking that potential. Over 300 of us worked together to develop the aspirations in these pages. It will take far more than 300 of us to bring our vision to life.

This book signals a beginning: A moment for our community to consider what we can achieve together. Soon our focus will shift to how we get it done. For now, we hope you feel the potential. To make it a reality, our community will need to work together, step by step.

Start here with this vision. And join us to build what’s next.
Our Goals

To foster excellence and creativity in our teaching, research, scholarship, patient care, and service.

To welcome students, faculty, and staff from all backgrounds to create an inclusive, equitable community that is nurturing and intellectually rigorous.

To cultivate in students habits of lifelong learning and critical and ethical thinking, thereby enabling them to be productive members and leaders of a global society.

To contribute positively to our home community of St. Louis, and to effect meaningful, constructive change in our world.

Our Intentions

To hold ourselves to the highest standards of excellence.

To educate aspiring leaders of great ability from diverse backgrounds.

To encourage faculty, staff, and students to be innovative, bold, independent, critical thinkers.

To build an inclusive, equitable, respectful, ethically principled environment for living, teaching, learning, and working for present and future generations.

To focus on meaningful and measurable outcomes for all of our endeavors.

At WashU, we generate, disseminate, and apply knowledge. We foster freedom of inquiry and expression of ideas in our research, teaching, and learning. We aim to create an environment that encourages and supports wide-ranging exploration at the frontier of discovery by embracing diverse perspectives from individuals of all identities and backgrounds. We promote higher education and rigorous research as fundamental components of an open, vibrant society. We strive to enhance the lives and livelihoods not only of our students, patients, and employees, but also of the people of the greater St. Louis community and beyond. We do so by addressing scientific, social, economic, medical, and other challenges in the local, national, and international realms.

Mission statement approved by the Faculty Senate Council in April 2021 and approved by the Board of Trustees on October 1, 2021.
Our Strategic Vision

We will mobilize research, education, and patient care to establish WashU and St. Louis as a global hub for transformative solutions to the deepest societal challenges.

A globally informed, community-driven vision for academic distinction

Guiding Principles
- Academic Distinction
- Community Impact
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Global Perspective
- Stewardship

Areas of Focus
- Research Excellence
- Environmental Research
- Digital Transformation
- Medical Research
- Public Health

Core Commitments
- Together we will...
  - Promote infrastructure, incentives, and policies to position faculty to achieve excellence in research, scholarship, and creative practice
  - Foster collaboration between units, schools, and campuses
  - Advance opportunities in medical research, public health, environmental research, and digital transformation
  - Provide resources for both technology transfer and entrepreneurship
- Together we will...
  - Center excellence in undergraduate, medical, professional, and graduate education to make WashU the ideal place for students to pursue their goals
  - Attract diverse, talented people and cultivate an inclusive WashU community and provide continuous development
  - Nurture a culture that promotes healthy excellence
  - Create a WashU model of leadership and empower each member of our community to develop and utilize their leadership capabilities
- Together we will...
  - Become the leading model for how a university can partner with local communities to resolve the most pressing problems of our day and how local solutions can have global impact
  - Promote global exchange in research, teaching, and learning
  - Advance community-based research, teaching, and practice with St. Louis outcomes at the forefront
  - Forge genuine partnerships in our community and mobilize operations to create greater equity in the city, state, and region
Our Guiding Principles
How we want to work

Academic Distinction
WashU strives for excellence in research, education, and patient care. This tenet is the cornerstone of our institution — and its heart. It informs and inspires everything we do. Our strategic plan will center academic distinction and advance this proud legacy for years to come.

Global Perspective
WashU is firmly rooted in St. Louis, and its vision of academic excellence extends beyond our local and national geography. The discovery and dissemination of knowledge is truly a global enterprise based on an environment of open collaboration and engagement with scholarship, challenges, and viewpoints around the world. We cherish the varied perspectives and practices that our international students, staff, and faculty bring to our community, and we value the intellectual fellowship we construct with our academic partners around the world.

Community Impact
WashU aspires to have a positive impact on the growth of each person in our community (faculty, staff, students, and patients) as well as on the lives of all members of the surrounding St. Louis community. Our faculty, staff, and students are lifted up and inspired by the local communities with which we engage and where we reside. We will establish and sustain mutually enhancing relationships that elevate both Washington University and the surrounding community.

Stewardship
WashU rests on the contributions of many generations that pushed the boundaries of knowledge and service, guaranteed the free expression of ideas, and sacrificed time and effort to build our institution. We will honor their careful stewardship by building on the spirit of their accomplishments and ensuring that the resources entrusted to our care grow in a sustainable way so that future generations will retain the ability to further the university’s mission in perpetuity.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
WashU aims to be a diverse community fully committed to the principles of equity, fairness, and inclusive excellence. We will pursue and value equity, diversity, and inclusion in our research, learning, clinical, and administrative environments so that we, collectively and individually, can benefit from the rich perspectives and contributions of individuals from all backgrounds.

Across Our Schools
Each school’s priorities contribute to our shared aspirations.

personalized medicine
new diagnostics and therapeutics

Medicine
slow age-dependent degenerative diseases
new approaches to manage mental health
expanded clinical and research platforms
entrepreneurship through WashU Innovation

center for the literary arts
program in public scholarship

transdisciplinary institute in applied data sciences (TRIADS)

Arts & Sciences
center for quantum leaps

incubator for transdisciplinary futures
literacies for life and career

transforming organizations

Business
education of executives for local and global impact
creating purpose-led, values-based, data-driven leaders

Engineering
engineering the brain
decarbonization, renewable materials, and environmental technology

reliable AI and cyberphysical systems

data science and sensing

community-engaged lawyering

Law
excellent traditional and data-driven scholarship
change-oriented legal education for tomorrow’s leaders

affordability and financial accessibility

Social Work & Public Health
community-driven science
climate change and environmental health and justice

community-engaged lawyering

data science and technology to advance the social good

Design & Visual Arts
built environment and sustainability
digital technology and fabrication

We are prepared to work across disciplines, departments, and schools, to be together as we think about how to grow and advance our research, elevate every person on our campus, and partner with St. Louis and our many global communities.

Mary McKay
Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Initiatives
We will advance our excellence in research, scholarship, and creative practice, affirming our existing areas of outstanding strength while displaying the agility to lead in emerging fields.

We want WashU to become a stronger, more collaborative institution. To meet the deepest societal challenges, we must draw on collective strengths and dramatically expand our research capacity. When we use a collaborative and human-centered approach, we can ask fuller questions about a given subject, and provide more generative ideas about problems transcending disciplines. Together, our work will have meaningful, lasting impact in the academy and beyond.

Enduring questions, pressing crises, future uncertainties—we’re here for it.
Our work is located in the present, past, and future: Fundamental discovery and the pursuit of knowledge are why the university exists.

In the contemporary world, this can mean working across fields to solve problems that are relevant to the human condition.
Research Excellence Across Fields

Dramatically expand our top-tier research, scholarship, and creative practice capacity through investment in people and infrastructure. Invest in programs on the cusp of greatness and grow the global reputation of our faculty.

Digital Transformation

Leverage the unprecedented resources of the computational age to grow the activities of researchers and students in digital domains. Establish a platform of schools and industry partners to advance studies in areas including AI and human interaction and quantitative social sciences.

Public Health

Develop an innovative, collaborative model for research and education to meet long-standing and future threats to public health and well-being across regional, national, and global contexts. Create a school of public health to drive equitable, evidence-based public health with a commitment to partnering with the local community, addressing serious underlying inequities, and generating scalable solutions.

Medical Research

Orient our School of Medicine’s pioneering research to advance personalized medicine to realize new diagnostics and therapeutics, develop new ways to slow age-dependent degenerative diseases, and create new approaches to manage mental health. Establish “Moonshot” initiatives that bring research and clinical programs together from across campuses into world-leading centers of excellence.

Environmental Research

Establish a center to grow areas of established excellence, leverage connections between research fields, and identify and nurture emerging research opportunities. Create an innovative research accelerator and incubator to position WashU to pursue major grants and high-risk/high-reward projects.

Core Commitments

Create infrastructure, incentives, administrative structures, and policies to advance top-tier research, scholarship, and creative practice. Foster collaboration between units, schools, and campuses. Provide resources for technology transfer and entrepreneurship. From basic to translational research, from classics to genomics, from finance to law, from architecture to sociology, from neurology to social work: We will position faculty to achieve excellence in research, scholarship, and creative practice.

That Set the Global Standard

For the growth of every person in our campus community

We will attract and develop top talent by embracing the full diversity of lived experiences and nurturing the aspirations of every member of our WashU community.

The rate of change in the world is accelerating. As we draw on the hard-won knowledge of our disciplines, we’ll empower each student to meet the challenges of a future yet unknown. We have so many revered educational programs at WashU. We will build on these proud traditions as we strive to create new legacies.

We’re committed to building a campus community where talented, diverse people can thrive. We want to help faculty, staff, and students build strengths in areas like leadership and mentorship. Such growth can have real, lasting impact for our people, our institution, and our region.

The next laureate, the next entrepreneur, the next pair of helping hands—they’re here.
Undergraduate Education

Position students to excel in an ever-changing world through curricular initiatives that both leverage our distinctive strengths and values as an institution and develop students' capacity to understand and communicate their growth and potential for positive impact throughout their lives.

Prioritize educational access and foster inclusive excellence by revising our curricula and support systems.

Graduate, Medical, and Professional Education

Build on the School of Medicine’s tradition of excellence by expanding and modernizing our student curricula and providing the requisite financial support to move the medical school toward a debt-free program.

Ensure that our top-rated professional schools continue to build on their renown and further opportunities to pursue interdisciplinary research and education across all schools.

Significantly strengthen doctoral education by advancing our curriculum, recruitment, student experience, and global presence.

WashU’s achievement in research, scholarship, and creative practice is inextricably linked to the profile of our programs in graduate, medical, and professional education. Outstanding faculty attract outstanding students, and outstanding students attract outstanding faculty. Through our coordinated suite of initiatives, we will achieve greater excellence in both our research and education missions.

A Place for Faculty, Staff, and Students

Make WashU the ideal place for faculty, staff, and students to pursue their goals.

Personal and Professional Growth: Promote a growth mindset in our WashU community and provide structures for continuous development.

Leadership: Create a WashU model of leadership, empower each member of our community to build their leadership capabilities, and become an institution renowned for achievement in leadership development.

Access: Attract diverse, talented people and cultivate in our WashU community a sincere connection to our campus and our region.

Campus Well-being: Nurture a culture that promotes healthy excellence and invest in systems to promote well-being.

Leadership: Create a WashU model of leadership, empower each member of our community to build their leadership capabilities, and become an institution renowned for achievement in leadership development.

Core Commitments

Pursue curricular, programmatic, and research excellence through equity, diversity, and inclusion

Lead in student access and advance student success

Address the multiple facets of wellness

Develop values-based programming for students, faculty, and staff

Provide opportunities to pursue entrepreneurial activities in educational programs and research

Enhance supports for international students

Pathways to success

Photos by: Jerry Naunheim Jr. (left), Sarah Carmody (middle left), Sarah Carmody (middle right), Jerry Naunheim Jr. (right)
For the good of every neighbor

We are WashU in St. Louis, for St. Louis, and with St. Louis—in our research, education, patient care, and operations. The innovations we develop at home we will apply at scale across the globe, and our global work will inform practices in our region and in our nation.

WashU and St. Louis have so much to offer one another. Trust needs to be the foundation of this relationship. WashU’s history is not uncomplicated: We have done much to advance prospects for our region and we have also fallen short of some of our highest ideals. We have the chance to partner to advance the long-term success of our city and state. To do so, we must lead by reflecting the voices of our community.

We’re a global institution. Our people and our research come from all over the world. Our global presence positions us to serve local communities, and our international reputation can grow by what we accomplish as WashU—in, for, and with St. Louis.

It starts here—Kampala, St. Louis, Mumbai, DC—and it can go anywhere next.
Community Research, Education, and Patient Care

Establish WashU as the leading model for how a university can partner with local communities for global impact.

Create a hub to advance community-based research, teaching, and practice to improve outcomes for St. Louis children and youth by addressing disparities in health, education, and economic opportunity.

Expand our clinical and research platforms to improve community access and patient outcomes in our city, state, and region.

Transform University College to meet the educational needs of modern students and lifelong learners, including those populations who, historically, have not had access to a Washington University education.

Global Presence

Undertake a global strategy that prioritizes deep, meaningful engagement with select regions around the globe to better concentrate our efforts and create greater impact.

Leverage existing strengths, such as the McDonnell International Scholars Academy, to create new student experiences and enhance graduate student recruitment.

Enhance research seed funding to broaden international partnerships and increase the impact of our scholarly activity.

University Operations

Approach our operational decisions with greater intentionality through advancing sustainability in university operations, business partnerships, and workforce composition as we demonstrate our values to achieve meaningful, beneficial impact in our own backyard.

Through operational administration and strategic external partnerships, we will make substantial contributions to improved quality of life for all community members, contribute to addressing the racial wealth gap through economically impactful supplier diversity, and work toward the well-being of the entire region.

I am excited by the commitment that Wash U has made to collaborate with the St. Louis community. I look forward to building new and deepening existing partnerships and collaborations to promote well-being in the St. Louis region.

Vetta Thompson
Brown School of Social Work

Photos by: Elad Gross (left), Sophie Devincenti (middle left), Hector Retamal (middle right), KANJv (right)
I am thrilled to share our vision for WashU’s future. It represents the culmination of more than 300 members of our community working together over an 18-month stretch.

I am grateful for the collaborative spirit of our work. We interacted with over 2,000 people to help us understand the perspectives of our community. As we now strive to bring our vision to life, our work will reflect those voices. And our success will depend upon them.

We know all too well how quickly the world can change. As we move forward, we will need to be flexible and responsive. I intend to be clear-eyed about our successes and shortcomings. I will remain committed to tracking our efforts in a defined, transparent way.

My goal is for all members of our community is to find their place in the vision for WashU’s future. Our first year of implementation is about bringing people together—offering connections within our community and maximizing our collective strength and potential. I encourage you to find areas of the vision that resonate with you and seek opportunities to get involved. It is inspiring that so many have already participated in the process. I encourage everyone to make the most of what lies ahead.

I’m grateful for the work we have done together. Thank you. With your participation, we can bring this vision for our university to life.

Beverly Wendland
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
And build what’s Next