

# **Simmons School of Education and Human Development**

**Catalyzing Discovery and Innovation**

**Strategic Plan - Academic Year 2018/19 - 2022/23**

**Updated: July 2018**

## Overview

This strategic plan is the collective work of faculty, administration and staff, students, and community stakeholders across Simmons School of Education and Human Development which took place from December 2017 through May 2018. Led by Dean Stephanie Knight, the planning process has sought to build upon the schools' exemplary work in teaching, research, and community-partnership building. Simmons' strategic plan, covering the next five years (from academic year 2018/19 to 2022/23), seeks to position the school as a local, regional, and global catalyst for discovery and innovation that is driven by a high-quality and deeply committed faculty and staff, teaching students who themselves are reaching for new levels of excellence, and supporting collaboration which leads to improved outcomes for communities and industries.

At its very core Simmons is rooted in the belief that making a positive difference in the lives of people and communities is the highest ideal to aspire towards. The following strategic agenda was developed to advance this aim. Over the next five years, Simmons will work to achieve four goals:

- Student Achievement - Recruit, retain, and graduate students of the highest quality.
- Research - Advance research efforts using rigorous approaches to address complex issues on both a local and global scale.
- Partnership - Create new and innovative paradigms for partnership and impact.
- Infrastructure - Grow Simmons' infrastructure to support capacity and growth.

Over 150 people participated in the creation of this plan through stakeholder conversations. A strategic planning task force made up of faculty and staff leadership shaped and provided direct input into specific plan elements. Task force facilitation and drafting of the plan was provided by Carlo Cuesta, managing partner of Creation In Common -- a strategic planning consultancy.

## Vision and Values

Simmons' vision and values express the success we wish to achieve and the belief system that guides how we will achieve it.

### Our Vision

#### Catalyzing Discovery and Innovation

Through excellence in research, teaching, and community outreach, Simmons is a catalyst for discovery and innovation that transforms social conditions and advances human potential.

### Our Values

At Simmons, we believe in...

- **Inspired Thinking** - Teaching that stimulates critical, creative, and interdisciplinary thinking is essential to preparing our students to lead.
- **Better Answers** - A world-class university education ties research and practice together, grounding learning in the pursuit of evidence-based solutions.
- **Diverse Expression** - Building an academic community from all walks of life is our fundamental advantage to creating impact that is just and equitable.
- **Daring Action** - Being entrepreneurial allows for risk taking and creates new ways for our school and students to make a difference.
- **Collaborative Impact** - We have a responsibility to contribute to the growth and betterment of the institutions and industries in North Texas and beyond.

## Goals, Strategies, and Outcomes

Our goals, strategies, and outcomes define the pathways we will take to realize our vision.

### Student Achievement

**Goal: Recruit, retain, and graduate students of the highest quality.**

#### **Strategies:**

- Cultivate and secure scholarship funding to recruit high-achieving students
- Resource efforts and build systems to broaden the applicant pool emphasizing recruitment of students from diverse and varied backgrounds
- Increasingly affirm and embrace equity, diversity, and social justice in the classroom
- Enhance student involvement in research and the development of evidence-based practice
- Increase interdisciplinary offerings for students (e.g. classes, degrees, certificates)
- Support department efforts to identify and address potential curriculum and program gaps as well as explore online and hybrid course offerings for students

#### **Outcomes:**

- Recognized among the top 50 schools of education by *US News and World Report*
- Increased enrollment, retention, graduation, and job placement
- Diverse demographic representation
- Simmons students develop critical thinking and lifelong learning skills that differentiate them professionally from their peers

## **Research**

**Goal: Advance research efforts using rigorous approaches to address complex issues on both a local and global scale.**

### **Strategies:**

- Coordinate with University efforts to achieve status as a tier-one research institution
- Enhance investment in research and incentivize faculty and staff to pursue new research and scholarship opportunities
- Define and promote signature areas of research that illustrate the school's excellence
- Cultivate opportunities that lead to interdisciplinary research within Simmons and across SMU
- Become a leader in assessment and evaluation to better understand the relationship between practice and outcomes

### **Outcomes:**

- Increase in research support and sponsored project funding
- Growth in the number of research projects and publication of meaningful findings
- Faculty and staff supported to pursue research efforts
- Enhanced University and public recognition of Simmons' contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of education and human development

## **Partnership**

**Goal: Create new and innovative paradigms for partnership and impact.**

### **Strategies:**

- Create a replicable model for partnership between a world class university, public, private and charter schools and districts, and the business community to transform the lives of children and families
- Increase the opportunities for involvement by students in civic and industry engagement and field work
- Advance efforts to integrate research and evidence-based practice as part of partnership efforts
- Evaluate impact of community and industry partnerships and share results with Simmons, University, and partners

### **Outcomes:**

- Participation in the creation and capacity building of a model school
- Growth in the number of students engaged with communities and industries
- Measurable impact in the communities and industries we serve

## Infrastructure

**Goal: Grow Simmons' infrastructure to support capacity and growth.**

### **Strategies:**

- Continue efforts to recruit, engage, and retain a high-quality, diverse faculty and staff
- Invest in staff professional development
- Increase staff capacity and infrastructure support for research, grants, administration, and communications
- Expand faculty capacity by adding tenure and clinical lines as well as attracting distinguished visiting scholars
- Encourage, incentivize, and provide structure for interdisciplinary, cross-departmental, program, and center collaborations
- Seek greater efficiencies by simplifying administrative policies and procedures
- Strengthen processes and systems for faculty governance and decision making

### **Outcomes:**

- Faculty rated and recognized among the best in the nation
- Increased administrative capacity
- Growth in collaboration across the school and university
- Enhanced faculty governance