



CHARLOTTE

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & EARTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Making the Next Move: CHESS

Strategic Plan: 2025-2033

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This strategic plan, “Making the Next Move,” charts a course for the College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences (CHESS) that will amplify its vitality, academic profile and impact. A committee of faculty, in consultation with the dean, authored the plan based on input from two surveys sent to faculty, staff, students, alumni and partners.

Three guiding principles structure the plan. First, the plan confirms CHESS’s commitment to advanced scholarship appropriate to an R1 university. Our pursuit of knowledge will be driven by disciplinary research as well as interdisciplinary inquiry and community-engaged scholarship. Much of this work addresses issues of cultural, social and environmental importance, or as the plan puts it, “Very Important Questions.” Second, this plan foregrounds excellence in education, epitomized by the “CHESS Promise” that commits the College to provide every student with the opportunity to participate in high-impact learning experiences as defined by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. Finally, this plan articulates an ethos of well-being, which refers to clearly defined practices to sustain and cultivate the communities that comprise the College, as well as the constituencies in our region and beyond with whom we maintain academic and service partnerships.

“Making the Next Move” provides a vision for CHESS at a moment when higher education’s contributions have never been more urgently needed. This roadmap will allow us to thrive as a core element of a burgeoning R1 university in one of the nation’s most dynamic cities in the years to come.

– **Chris Boyer, Ph.D.**

Founding Dean, College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences

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Members of the CHESS Strategic Planning Committee

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- Jürgen Buchenau – Past Chair/Program Director/Professor, History Department
- Sara Gagné – Chair/Associate Professor, Earth, Environmental and Geographical Sciences Department
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- Chris Boyer – Dean, CHESS
- Facilitator: Sharon A. McDade, Ed.D. – Practice Leader for Strategic Services with Greenwood Asher & Associates

The CHESS strategic plan uses terms with specific meanings, defined here for easy reference.

Career Readiness derives from the definition articulated by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) as “a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college-educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management.” The eight core competencies as understood in the context of CHESS are career and self-development, communication, critical thinking, engagement across perspectives, leadership, professionalism, teamwork and technology. [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\)](#). (2024). Career readiness: Competencies for a career-ready workforce. Bethlehem, PA. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. (2025). What are career skills? University Career Center. [What Are Career Skills? | Career Center](#)

High-impact learning practices (HIPs) support transformative learning by promoting student engagement and significantly increasing retention and success to graduation across all disciplines. Practices are wide-ranging and can include problem-based learning, cohort models, first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, internships, service-learning, and capstone courses and projects. Key elements include performance expectations set at appropriately high levels; interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters; frequent, timely and constructive feedback; periodic structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning; and public demonstration of competence. Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). (n.d.). [Trending Topic: High-impact practices](#). Washington, DC.

Research conforms to the UNC Charlotte definition established by the Division of Research, which states: We value research in all its forms, including scholarly inquiry, discovery, exploration, innovation, publication, creative activities, entrepreneurship, community engagement and interdisciplinary endeavors. Division of Research. (2022). [Research Shaping What's Next: Mission](#). Charlotte, NC: University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Students, unless specifically specified, refers both to graduate students and to undergraduate students enrolled in one or more CHESS programs. In some cases as made clear by context, this term refers to any UNC Charlotte student enrolled in a class offered by a CHESS department or program.

Very Important Questions refers to the key issues that are the objects of inquiry by CHESS faculty and students. They are the phenomena that have shaped and continue to confront human societies, the environment and each of us as individuals, including those related to birth, aging and death; morality and the pursuit of a flourishing life; religion and spirituality; mind, consciousness and language; culture and society; the factors that drive change over time; wealth and poverty; peace and conflict; law, healthcare and political systems; science and technology; the earth and environment; and other key elements of the human condition.

Well-being means positive physical, mental, social and environmental health. In our academic and staff settings, well-being encompasses the overall quality of life of students, faculty and staff as well as their capacity to participate fully in academic, professional and campus activities with a strong sense of meaning, purpose and contribution. CHESS is committed to understanding, for both intrinsic and practical interests, how to promote the health of individuals, communities and the environment as well as the challenges, barriers and difficulties that often interfere with their thriving.



MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

MISSION

The College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences fosters a vibrant and supportive research culture that values a wide range of methods and interdisciplinary endeavors and addresses critical challenges facing humanity. We are committed to the CHESS Promise of cultivating an intellectually rigorous and high-impact learning environment that serves human, social and environmental well-being. CHESS magnifies the results of its teaching and research through collaboration with internal and external communities of students, alumni and other partners in the region and beyond.

VISION

To be an internationally recognized academic community in which the interplay of humanities and sciences informs holistic education, fosters research excellence and promotes the mutual improvement of our communities and the world in which we live.

VALUES

Holistic Education: CHESS aims to foster holistic and transformative education by engaging students in high-impact learning experiences, including experiential learning and developing important life and career skills that expose them to the Very Important Questions confronting humanity.

Cutting-Edge Research: CHESS strives for transformative and groundbreaking research in all its forms, including scholarly inquiry, discovery, exploration, innovation, publication, creative activities, entrepreneurship and community-engaged endeavors.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: CHESS values and leverages interdisciplinary synergy to enhance teaching and research by drawing on the breadth and depth of its departments, programs and centers.

Community Focus: CHESS serves our region and beyond through alumni, community and local to global partnerships of mutual benefit.

Ethical Commitment: CHESS anchors its activities in a commitment to human, social and environmental well-being.

Culture of Excellence: CHESS fosters a supportive working and learning culture that rewards excellence while striving for the overall well-being of our faculty, staff and students.

Integrity and Transparency: CHESS is committed to fostering a culture of transparency, openness and integrity in all operational, academic and research contexts.



COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES &
EARTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

CHESS STRATEGIC PLAN

AREA A: RESEARCH

This section presents the goals, objectives and actions that will position CHESS as a leader in research excellence and scholarly activities that serve the communities and world in which we live. Three principles guide this vision:

1. Research in all its forms. We value research in all its forms, including scholarly inquiry, discovery, exploration, innovation, publication, creative activities, entrepreneurship, community engagement and interdisciplinary endeavors.

2. Community-centered. We welcome community-centered endeavors and promote public-facing opportunities to share the products of our research in our region and beyond.

3. Distribution of research benefits. The resources and other benefits derived from implementing the actions listed below will be distributed judiciously across the College, taking into account the varying needs of units and programs.

Area A presents three goals. Goal A1 outlines the broad approaches that will define CHESS's unique research contributions to UNC Charlotte and its world-class aspirations. Goal A2 lists the critical resources and support needed to implement CHESS's research strategy. Goal A3 emphasizes the importance of student-centered research and community-engaged research to CHESS's potential.

Goal A1. Leverage the scholarly synergies of the College in the Humanities, Earth Sciences and Social Sciences.

Objective A1.1. Launch a nationally recognized, interdisciplinary research hub or center focused on critical human and environmental problems relevant to the Charlotte region and the world.

Action A1.1.1. Form a steering committee to identify three or four cross-cutting research themes and to develop a business plan that includes desired outcomes and their metrics.

Action A1.1.2. Build upon and evaluate the CIVIQ internal seed funding program focused on critical human and environmental problems relevant to the Charlotte region and the world.

Action A1.1.3. Recruit existing faculty to lead and staff theme-focused research teams.

Objective A1.2. Foster international and global research and collaboration.

Action A1.2.1. Encourage and provide support for faculty to apply for international awards and fellowships.

Action A1.2.2. Identify sources of funding to support international scholarship and research by faculty.

Action A1.2.3. Seek mechanisms to host international scholars regularly.

Action A1.2.4. Deepen the cooperative relationship with the World Affairs Council of Charlotte.

Objective A1.3. Strengthen procedures that promote public-facing expressions of research.

Action A1.3.1. Encourage departments to consider adopting expansive definitions of activities that constitute research for faculty evaluation purposes, including research products aimed at non-specialist academic audiences.

Action A1.3.2. Introduce College-wide policies and incentives that promote public-facing research.

Objective A1.4. Advance the research mission by recruiting, nurturing and retaining world-class faculty across the College.

Action A1.4.1. Identify critical areas of need that will form the basis for multi-unit cluster hires.

Action A1.4.2. Budget for attracting and retaining top-tier research faculty in all areas of the College.

Action A1.4.3. Provide opportunities for faculty development in grant writing, research methodologies and other research support skills.

Goal A2. Invest in research support infrastructure that positions CHESS as a national leader in research excellence and innovation.

Objective A2.1. Secure consistently available sources of support for faculty pursuing high-quality research.

Action A2.1.1. Expand the small grants program to ensure reliable delivery of meaningful and diverse forms of support.

Action A2.1.2. Establish procedures to distribute College Faculty Research Grant funds effectively and equitably.

Action A2.1.3. Pursue internal and external opportunities to strengthen research support.

Objective A2.2. Recruit, retain and train skilled staff committed to securing and managing external grants and contracts.

Action A2.2.1. Take steps to facilitate post-award management for small grants, such as those that provide modest funds for research or other scholarly activities.

Action A2.2.2. Identify research staffing needs across the College and develop a staffing plan to recruit experienced staff to address the most pressing needs.

Action A2.2.3. Develop a training and professional development program for research support staff in collaboration with the Division of Research.

Objective A2.3. Maintain and expand research facilities, including laboratories, software and computing resources, technical support and centers.

Action A2.3.1. Undertake a college-wide survey to catalog laboratories, software and computing resources, technical support and supplies to ascertain current strengths, challenges and future needs.

Action A2.3.2. Encourage the shared use of facilities across the College in ways that facilitate research.

Action A2.3.3. Collaborate with Atkins Library Staff and the Provost's Office to establish a digital laboratory space available to all CHESS disciplines.

Action A2.3.4. Support and enhance the visibility of CHESS research centers, including those housed in departments.

Goal A3. Identify and expand opportunities for student and community participation in research.

Objective A3.1. Recognize and reward student-centered research.

Action A3.1.1. Introduce a mechanism that encourages and facilitates the joint dissemination of research by faculty and students.

Action A3.1.2. Coordinate with the Office of Undergraduate Research, the Graduate School, Urban Institute, urbanCORE and other units that promote student research to ensure campus-wide opportunities are accessible to CHESS faculty and students.

Action A3.1.3. Explore the creation of one or more rotating graduate research assistantship positions and/or graduate student research funding.

Objective A3.2. Recognize and reward community-engaged research.

Action A3.2.1. Encourage departments to adopt faculty review policies recognizing research products originating from community-engaged research.

Action A3.2.2. Submit a proposal to the Division of Research that calls for reducing or eliminating the high costs imposed on partners that fund research.

Action A3.2.3. Strengthen relationships between faculty, students and community-engaged hubs on campus, such as urbanCORE and Charlotte Action Research Project (CHARP).

AREA B: EDUCATION

This section articulates the goals, objectives and actions that bring to life the **CHESS Promise: All CHESS undergraduate and graduate students will have the opportunity to participate in at least one high-impact experience as part of a world-class, intellectually rigorous education that flows from CHESS's unique orientation to questions of human, social and environmental well-being.**

Five principles undergird the CHESS Promise:

1. **Holistic, transformative education.** CHESS students cultivate meaningful life and career skills in a supportive environment grounded in CHESS's commitment to human, social and environmental well-being.
2. **Innovative and engaged learning.** CHESS students benefit from innovative course designs and pedagogical strategies grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning and opportunities for engaged learning.
3. **Disciplinary depth and breadth.** CHESS students profit from the deep disciplinary expertise of our educator-scholars and choose among the widest variety of undergraduate, graduate, certificate and honors courses and programs at UNC Charlotte.
4. **Interdisciplinary synergy.** CHESS students benefit from and contribute to the College's distinctive interdisciplinarity that promotes collaboration between faculty, departments and disciplines across the University.
5. **Community and global engagement.** CHESS students enrich their perspectives and opportunities by engaging in our local and global community partnerships.

Area B presents three goals. Goal B1 aligns our educational strategy with the CHESS Promise to all undergraduate and graduate students. Goal B2 explains how we will implement the CHESS Promise in the classroom. Goal B3 clarifies how we will implement the CHESS Promise by supporting faculty and staff and strengthening our culture of excellence.

Goal B1. Elaborate, share and celebrate the CHESS Promise.

Objective B1.1. Delineate the CHESS Promise and establish it as a defining characteristic of the College.

Action B1.1.1. Promote a shared vocabulary and framework of intellectual rigor, high-impact learning and well-being among students, faculty and staff.

Action B1.1.2. Articulate how each unit within CHESS studies and improves human, social or environmental well-being.

Action B1.1.3. Disseminate the CHESS Promise widely to students, faculty, staff and broader audiences.

Objective B1.2. Honor the CHESS Promise.

Action B1.2.1. Identify motivating strategies to recognize faculty and graduate student instructors who excel in pedagogical development and effective course design, faculty mentors with proven success, staff who consistently support the CHESS Promise and students who embody its ideals.

Action B1.2.2. Promote CHESS awards and award winners to the University to inspire its members and boost the visibility of the CHESS Promise.

Goal B2. Fulfill the CHESS Promise in the classroom using high-impact learning practices that maximize our distinctive strengths.

Objective B2.1. Ensure that all CHESS students have the opportunity to experience transformative, high-impact learning as an integral part of their programs.

Action B2.1.1. Promote the importance of high-impact learning experiences to all CHESS instructors and deliver professional development and support for integrating these practices in courses.

Action B2.1.2. Improve the design and delivery of high-impact courses, creating flexible and innovative learning environments that address students' diverse needs and interests.

Action B2.1.3. Explore and launch a select group of innovative and transformative, interdisciplinary and team-taught courses designed to serve nearly all CHESS students and worthy of national and international recognition.

Objective B2.2. Imbue a sense of discovery and intellectual skill development for students into curricula, advising and student activities.

Action B2.2.1. Prepare students to appreciate and address the Very Important Questions that have shaped and continue to confront human societies, the environment and each of us as individuals, including those related to birth, aging and death; morality and the pursuit of a flourishing life; religion and spirituality; mind, consciousness and language; culture and society; the factors that drive change over time; wealth and poverty; peace and conflict; law, healthcare and political systems; science and technology; and the earth and environment.

Action B2.2.2. Develop students' confidence and skills necessary to confront the Very Important Questions in their studies and throughout their lives.

Action B2.2.3. Create opportunities for faculty to discuss methodologies for understanding or addressing the Very Important Questions in the classroom and with co-curricular activities.

Objective B2.3. Infuse intellectual rigor into curricula, advising and student activities.

Action B2.3.1. Provide opportunities for students to engage in intellectually rigorous scholarly activities, including academic competitions, Honors programs and courses, research mentorships and research activities (e.g., conferences, poster sessions).

Action B2.3.2. Develop a shared understanding of vital intellectual virtues such as curiosity, patience, persistence, integrity, diligence and humility among faculty and students.

Action B2.3.3. Help students appreciate that their growing knowledge, skills and intellectual virtues are indispensable for cultivating intellectual excellence, meeting high expectations in the classroom and achieving long-term career, professional and personal success.

Objective B2.4. Embed career readiness for students into curricula, advising and student activities.

Action B2.4.1. Offer students, faculty and advisors a framework for understanding the concept of career readiness and sample behaviors that exemplify career readiness.

Action B2.4.2. Help students recognize that their courses offer opportunities to develop foundational and transferable thinking skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, analysis, research and project management; social skills, including leadership, communication, ethical commitment and teamwork across perspectives; and technical and professional skills, including digital literacy and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence.

Action B2.4.3. Furnish opportunities and support for students to explain to themselves and others how they use their learning experiences to develop their career readiness.

Action B2.4.4. Outline career readiness opportunities for each major and graduate program, consolidate the details at the college level and share them within CHESS and with campus advisors and broader audiences.

Action B2.4.5. Work across departments to identify meaningful and accurate data to demonstrate the value and impact of CHESS degree programs.

Goal B3. Uphold the CHESS Promise by inspiring and equipping faculty and staff to bolster a culture of excellence.

Objective B3.1. Inspire and support intellectual rigor that is appropriately strong and consistent with a world-class educational experience.

Action B3.1.1. Compile and distribute a set of best practices, grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning, which the College and faculty can use to inspire students to recognize and aim for scholarly excellence.

Action B3.1.2. Partner with the Center for Teaching and Learning to explore a new workshop series on setting and meeting high expectations for learning.

Action B3.1.3. Ensure that faculty review processes document the value of faculty work in designing and offering high-impact learning experiences.

Objective B3.2. Motivate talented students to embrace CHESS's world-class education.

Action B3.2.1. Promote CHESS's educational advantages and practical skill-building opportunities to attract outstanding undergraduate and graduate students.

Action B3.2.2. Involve undergraduate students in graduate learning experiences, including classes and research, to familiarize them with the benefits and opportunities of UNC Charlotte's graduate education and early entry [4+1] programs.

Objective B3.3. Review current programs to refine curricula and align them with the expertise of CHESS faculty and the diverse needs of students from North Carolina and beyond.

Action B3.3.1. Advance relationships and mechanisms for CHESS faculty to work together and with faculty in other UNC Charlotte colleges to develop and implement interdisciplinary, team-taught and community-engaged courses.

Action B3.3.2. Hire educator-scholars who demonstrate both disciplinary excellence and a commitment to pedagogical improvement.

Action B3.3.3. Streamline curricular complexity and diversify course delivery flexibility and methods to meet the evolving needs of today's learners.

Action B3.3.4. Encourage departments and faculty to consider offering alternative credentials such as undergraduate and graduate certificates and teaching modalities that would reach new student demographics.

Objective B3.4. Boost support, training and resources for faculty and graduate student instructors to create and deliver advanced pedagogy and courses.

Action B3.4.1. Expand pedagogical development training and mentoring opportunities that will advance the CHES Promise for faculty and graduate student instructors.

Action B3.4.2. Develop technology-focused, including Artificial Intelligence, training and support for faculty and graduate student instructors to equip them with pedagogical skills to advance CHES education.

Action B3.4.3. Offer meaningful incentives for Continuing (NTT) Faculty to pursue significant, widely effective course redesigns that contribute to the pedagogical vision of the CHES Promise.

Action B3.4.4. Use seminars, colloquia and projects developed by multiple departments and colleges to help students develop professional networks.

AREA C: COMMUNITY

This section presents the goals, objectives and actions that will advance, enhance, expand and reinforce CHES's impact on communities within the university and beyond. Four principles guide our efforts:

- 1. CHES thrives within communities.** CHES thrives as an integral member of interconnected communities – within CHES and across the UNC Charlotte colleges, with our alumni and extending beyond our campus to Charlotte, the region and state, as well as nationally and globally.
- 2. Community connections.** CHES strives to foster relationships with its communities by creating mutually enriching connections.
- 3. Elevate identity and communication.** Articulating and promoting CHES's unique identity and achievements, reinforcing its reputation and deepening interaction with diverse audiences.
- 4. Empowering and valuing people.** CHES actively amplifies the contributions and potential of members of its family – students, faculty, staff, alumni and partners.

Area C presents three goals. Goal C1 addresses identity, fundraising, partnerships and work environment. Goal C2 calls for expanded connections with alumni. Goal C3 explains how we will expand engagement locally, regionally and globally.

Goal C1. Nurture CHESS's identity as a thriving community while emphasizing its essential role in the development and excellence of UNC Charlotte as a world-class university.

Objective C1.1 Articulate CHESS's identity, value and contributions.

Action C1.1.1. Devise and execute a CHESS communications plan with local-to-global messaging.

Action C1.1.2. Update the website and news distribution scheme systematically to showcase how CHESS adds value to UNC Charlotte's vision through student education, research and community engagement.

Action C1.1.3. Celebrate CHESS achievements by the College, departments, programs, centers, students, faculty and staff with an annual CHESS showcase of research and teaching.

Action C1.1.4. Promote the achievements of CHESS students, faculty and staff—both within UNC Charlotte and across collaborative efforts with other colleges—as well as to external audiences.

Objective C1.2. Develop learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

Action C1.2.1. Form a CHESS mentoring program for faculty and students, promoting engagement with community partners through the support of excellence in teaching, research and service.

Action C1.2.2. Expand and S the means of connecting CHESS students with volunteer and service-learning opportunities in Charlotte and beyond, including community organizations.

Action C1.2.3. Create career skill certification options with the University Career Center, utilizing CHESS community engagement coursework.

Objective C1.3. Recognize the value of the CHESS faculty and staff.

Action C1.3.1. Respect and value faculty and staff time by identifying and simplifying burdensome workflows and reducing unnecessary effort dedicated to service and administrative tasks.

Action C1.3.2. Institute faculty and staff committees to collect and address workload concerns among ranks and units.

Action C1.3.3. Advocate with university leadership for increased salaries for faculty and staff and maintain regular communications regarding the status of these efforts.

Action C1.3.4. Foster a sense of community, engagement and transparency among all CHESS members, including staff and full- and part-time faculty, through shared communications and events.

Goal C2. Enrich and expand engagement with CHESS alumni.

Objective C2.1. Partner with and support the CHESS Alumni Council.

Action C2.1.1. Support the Alumni Council's mission to enhance the strength of the Alumni Council through member recruitment, leadership training and succession planning.

Action C2.1.2. Present regular opportunities for alumni to lend their expertise to student career coaching, upskilling and departmental engagement.

Action C2.1.3. Create mechanisms to recognize outstanding service by CHESS alumni.

Objective C2.2. Cultivate connections with the broader CHESS alumni community.

Action C2.2.1. Create alumni opportunities for service, philanthropy, guest speaking, mentoring and partnering in internships.

Action C2.2.2. Educate and engage CHESS alumni and ambassadors on strategic vision, current initiatives and successes using CHESS communication channels.

Goal C3: Engage with regional, state and global communities.

Objective C3.1. Encourage engagement with non-government organizations, businesses and government.

Action C3.1.1. Cultivate strategic partnerships to promote and advance CHESS faculty, staff and student engagement across the Charlotte region.

Action C3.1.2. Create a communications strategy to promote and publicize faculty, staff and student engagement across the Charlotte region to potential partners.

Action C3.1.3. Inaugurate a CHESS Advisory Council composed of local thought leaders in the Charlotte area who could deliver insight and assistance in fundraising and communications efforts.

Objective C3.2. Build financial support for CHESS education, service and research activities.

Action C3.2.1. Articulate a CHESS-specific fundraising strategy that includes departments, centers and University Advancement.

Action C3.2.2. Strengthen the funding ecosystem to support CHESS student scholarships, research and engagement.

Action C3.2.3. Align the goals of CHESS and its units with University funding campaigns and diversify funding through contributions and research.

PROCESS

The College of Humanities & Earth and Social Sciences (CHESS) at UNC Charlotte developed a new strategic plan (SP) through a year-long process led by a six-member Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). The committee reviewed related strategic plans, conducted positioning analyses and administered two surveys—one to gather baseline input and another to collect feedback on the draft.

Launching the Strategic Planning Process

In Fall 2024, Dean Chris Boyer and the CHESS Faculty Council initiated planning, forming a six-member SPC with equal representation from within and outside the council, as well as Dean Boyer. At its first meeting on October 19, the SPC requested a facilitator, and Dr. Sharon A. McDade of Greenwood/Asher & Associates assumed the role. The SPC resumed work on November 10 via Zoom and began gathering foundational information.

Gathering Foundational Research and Strategic Inputs

To inform the plan, the SPC drew on an internal survey, strategic plan reviews and positioning analyses. The initial survey, conducted from November 13 to 27, 2024, targeted faculty, staff, external collaborators, postdoctoral trainees, and students. It included eight questions – five on strategic priorities (programs, research, support and community engagement) and three on broader considerations (a \$5 million gift and individual success needs). The survey yielded 143 responses: 113 faculty members, 8 administrators, 18 staff members, 2 graduate students and 12 undergraduates. To increase student participation, the SPC enlisted department chairs, distributed flyers, hosted snack-based gatherings and conducted in-class outreach. Despite these efforts, student response rates remained low. Since respondents could select multiple roles, percentages by category are not available.

In parallel, the SPC reviewed strategic plans from UNC Charlotte units—including other colleges, Academic Affairs, Shaping What's Next and Research Shaping What's Next, the University SP and its allied research SP—as well as more than 50 SPs from peer institutions across the UNC system, comparison research universities and urban-focused campuses. These documents informed CHESS's mission, vision and strategic initiatives. A combined SWOT/SOAR (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, aspirations, results) analysis clarified CHESS's positioning and helped SPC members interpret survey data through the lens of institutional alignment and R1 aspirations.

Synthesizing Input and Refining the Framework

Building on this research, the SPC identified three strategic areas, each with three goals. While the document could not address each individual comment, the SPC synthesized recurring themes and representative insights into a unified framework. This input also shaped CHESS's mission, vision and values statements. The SPC sought feedback from the university provost and presented a draft to the CHESS Faculty Council on April 25. The evolving document incorporated input from both sources.

Gathering Final Feedback and Strengthening the Document

Between August 2 and September 12, 2025, the SPC collected feedback on the whole draft of the document. The dean's office sent survey invitations to faculty, staff, external collaborators, postdoctoral trainees and community partners. At the August 15 Faculty Convocation, Dean Boyer presented the plan and encouraged survey participation. Outreach efforts yielded 148 responses: 134 faculty members, 21 administrators, 7 staff members, 2 graduate students and 5 alumni. Respondents identified their academic homes as 67 from Humanities, 14 from Sciences and 73 from Social Sciences. As with the initial survey, percentages by category are unavailable due to multiple affiliations of respondents. Despite use of multiple outreach methods to students, response rates remained low.

SPC committees reviewed all comments and analyzed linear scale ratings (5 = good, 3 = acceptable, 1 = poor). The overall average score was 4.16 across 18 linear scale questions. Revisions addressed conceptual, technical and grammatical issues as well as the inclusion of additional definitions. The SPC incorporated many suggestions for more precise wording into the final document.

Releasing the Strategic Plan

Dean Boyer and the SPC finalized the plan and introduced it to the CHESS community on October 17, 2025, during Niner Nation Week. Between November 10, 2024, and the release date, the SPC convened weekly, contributing approximately 1,265 person-hours. The plan is effective from 2025 to 2033, with a mid-point review scheduled for 2029-2030.

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