

THE COAA DIFFERENCE

Impact Through the Arts and Design



2026-2031 STRATEGIC PLAN



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE

COLLEGE OF ARTS +
ARCHITECTURE

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A Note from the Dean

This strategic plan, “*The COAA Difference*,” charts a course for the College of Arts + Architecture that will amplify its unique identity within the UNC System and its vibrant academic profiles, while broadening its impact. Guided by a two-fold goal of positioning the College as a cornerstone of the Charlotte Model and as an anchor institution within the city’s cultural community, this plan affirms our commitment to imbuing the campus and inspiring the city through the arts, performing arts, and design. Every day, the College of Arts + Architecture demonstrates that artists, performers, and designers drive innovation, create meaning, and make crucial contributions to vibrant communities. This plan provides a framework for the work of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni to thrive for years to come.

This document was crafted by a dedicated committee of department and school leaders in consultation with the dean, associate deans, faculty, staff, and a wide range of individuals representing all aspects of our college community. The process engaged multiple meetings, a retreat involving COAA leadership, a survey, and input opportunities. Importantly, the process aligned the College's ambitions with those of the University, and this can be seen throughout the three Pillars that represent the College's commitments to student success, top tier research, and a robust community of allied artists, designers, and performers.

This final version of the plan incorporates feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, and it streamlines the overall document by emphasizing the College's aspirations while offering goals with actionable objectives. Operational and day-to-day needs have been folded into the overall document or recorded for administrative purposes, thereby reducing the number of Pillars. In this way, the plan aligns with the plans of the University and other colleges but remains a distinctive roadmap for our unique collection of disciplines at a time in which the arts, performing arts, design, and architecture are so critically needed.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to all for your input, especially the chairs and director, without whom our strategic planning process would not have been possible. Your commitment to the success of the College is inspiring.

José Gámez, Ph.D.

Dean, College of Arts + Architecture

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Mission

Grounded in a commitment to excellent teaching, the College of Arts + Architecture sparks curiosity, fosters innovative research, and anchors collaborative projects that empower and sustain communities.

Vision

The College of Arts + Architecture will infuse the university's urban mission with arts and design, creative research, and collaborative projects that inspire cultural vibrancy throughout Charlotte, the region, and beyond.

Pillar A - Advancing student success through a commitment to academic excellence and life-changing opportunities that build on the College of Arts + Architecture's distinctive portfolio of allied arts and design disciplines.

Goal A1: Offer a distinctive, dynamic, and demanding education via the 'Charlotte Model'¹ underpinned by the COAA's uniquely aligned arts and design programs, innovative teaching practices, and life-changing engagement opportunities.

Obj A1.1: Elevate the academic journey by integrating essential skills and hands-on learning with dedicated mentorship.

Action A1.1.1. Bolster the COAA's contribution to the University's general education curriculum in order to help students attain core competencies.

Action A1.1.2. Maintain accreditation of programs and engage with future-focused discussions that help evolve accreditation metrics.

Action A1.1.3. Increase opportunities in curricular and co-curricular offerings for students to engage in high-impact practices (HIPs)², scholarship, creative discovery, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Action A1.1.4. Establish Entrepreneurship Certificate in the COAA.

Action A1.1.5. Increase departmental honors programs in the COAA.

¹ "[The Charlotte Model](#)" is UNC Charlotte's holistic framework designed to help students achieve success at every stage of their college experience, from discovering their purpose to transitioning to post-graduation life. It connects academic progress, skill development, campus engagement, career readiness, and financial well-being into a coordinated system that helps students thrive.

² High-impact learning practices (HIPs) support deep learning by promoting student engagement. Research shows that HIPs significantly increase retention and success to graduation across all disciplines. Practices 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. Kuh, G.D. (2008). Excerpt from high-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. *Association of American Colleges and Universities*, 14(3), 28-29.

Obj. A1.2: Empower students to be competitive professionally and make lifelong contributions to society.

Action A1.2.1. Record and report highlights of student achievement.

Action A1.2.2. Record and report alumni highlights as a measure of lifelong achievement and share with the Alumni Association.

Obj. A1.3: Empower faculty to integrate cutting-edge instructional methods and technologies that deepen student engagement, research, and learning.

Action A1.3.1. Advocate for investments in new equipment and classroom facilities that prepare students to be competitive in the workplace.

Action A1.3.2. Advocate for investments in facilities repairs, upgrades, and expansions to meet the COAA's evolving pedagogical and research needs.

Obj. A1.4: Cultivate and foster opportunities for mentoring, professional development, and practical experiences for graduate students.

Action A1.4.1. Expand mentoring and professional and leadership development opportunities for graduate students on and off campus that offer progressive responsibility and civic engagement.

Action A1.4.2. Explore opportunities to increase graduate enrollment.

Goal A2: Provide a cost-effective education that bridges gaps between enrollment pathways and prioritizes measurable student achievement.

Obj. A2.1: Increase retention and on-time graduation for all students.

Action A2.1.1. Maintain or improve 4-year time-to-graduation rates for students in the COAA.

Action A2.1.2. Enhance program efficacy through targeted interventions and continuous review of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Action A2.1.3. Regularly review COAA Advising Structure to accommodate expanded program offerings.

Obj. A2.2: Increase opportunities for students to pursue their education in formats that fit their needs.

Action A2.2.1. Establish new online degree programs, in conjunction with the School of Professional Studies, that expand the reach of the COAA.

Action A2.2.2. Explore opportunities for 90 credit hour degree programs.

Action A2.2.3. Explore opportunities to increase undergraduate enrollment.

Obj. A2.3: Work to reduce financial stressors to safeguard the path to degree completion for all students.

Action A2.3.1. Increase scholarship dollars for students pursuing all degree programs.

Action A2.3.2. Increase scholarship funding for study abroad.

Goal A3: Equip students with the tools to adapt, evolve, and remain versatile in order to lead and succeed in an evolving global landscape.

Obj A3.1: Increase AI literacy in the COAA and position students to innovate and lead in the ethical evolution of AI use in the arts and architecture.

Action A3.1.1. Enhance ethical AI training for students to increase AI literacy and position students to innovate and lead.

Action A3.1.2. Increase the use of AI and emerging technologies in COAA courses, research, and collaborative projects.

Obj A3.2: Expand the horizons of our students by increasing access to global perspectives and immersive international engagement.

Action A3.2.1. Broaden opportunities for students to gain international exposure through a variety of study abroad experiences, including virtual alternatives.

Action A3.2.2. Infuse internationalization across curricular and co-curricular learning experiences by increasing faculty exchanges, speakers, and institutional partnerships for learning enrichment.

Obj. A3.3: Cultivate and foster leadership skills and intellectual curiosity necessary for a lifetime of learning.

Action A3.3.1. Increase embodied intelligence, emotional intelligence, and other forms of transferable skills and position students to innovate and lead through visual, inter-, and intra-personal interaction.

Action A3.3.2. Expand professional and leadership development opportunities for students on and off campus that offer progressive responsibility and civic engagement.

Pillar B - Powering the human experience through inquiry, research, and creative discovery.

Goal B1: Establish the COAA as an innovative research leader in the arts and design regionally, nationally, and globally.

Obj. B1.1: Enhance the academic reputations and research cultures of all units and foster signature research areas.

Action B1.1.1. Increase campus-wide visibility by translating COAA research expertise into university-wide initiatives.

Action B1.1.2. Foster “Signature Research Areas”³ and “Research Areas of Focus and Distinction”⁴ by aligning funding, teaching, and workload policies to achieve national and international prominence.

Action B1.1.3. Enhance support for the funding of COAA research.

Action B1.1.4. Increase the recognition of faculty research excellence by increasing nominations for competitive research awards and prizes.

Obj. B1.2: Strengthen research by engaging and supporting world-class faculty, staff, and students.

Action B1.2.1. Undertake a study of workload at peer institutions in order to assess current college workload policy and ensure that R1 research expectations are balanced with a commitment to teaching excellence and productivity.

Action B1.2.2. Align strategic recruitment and retention of top-tier talent to advance research.

Action B1.2.3. Provide professional development and training for technical staff, research administration staff, and tenure-line faculty.

Action B1.2.4. Provide targeted investment in administrative training and development to support the growth of faculty and staff leadership skills.

Obj. B1.3: Enhance opportunities for graduate and undergraduate student research.

³ The University defines “signature research areas” (also known as “areas of excellence”) as existing and emerging areas of research excellence with unique distinction and future opportunities. These are broad thematic areas where the University has achieved a national level of distinction and areas where continued work, future investments, and new resources will significantly advance our research reputation, raise the profile of our research and scholarly programs, and align with our top-tier research university status.

⁴ [Research Areas of Focus and Distinction](#)

Action B1.3.1. Expand opportunities for students to participate in faculty-led research.

Action B1.3.2. Increase funding of student professional development activities.

Action B1.3.3. Increase the amount of grant funding for graduate students.

Action B1.3.4. Elevate the on-campus presence of student research through a sustained partnership with the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR).

Obj. B1.4: Expand the COAA's infrastructure to support and sustain R1 research expectations.

Action B1.4.1. Develop a sustainable modernization plan for research facilities, labs, and studios (e.g., fabrication, robotics, digital media).

Action B1.4.2. Align investments in equipment, instrumentation, and library resources with Signature Research Areas and industry needs.

Action B1.4.3. Improve data systems and analysis to enrich and inform the COAA's financial strategies.

Goal B2: Harness the COAA's globally relevant creative expertise to position the University as an anchor of Charlotte's cultural community and fuel an arts-driven city.

Obj. B2.1: Provide leadership for cultural institutions and events in the Charlotte region.

Action B2.1.1. Support and recognize faculty cultural leadership in the region.

Obj. B2.2: Utilize high-profile public events, performances, and exhibitions to foster an arts-inspired city and elevate the College's research profile.

Action B2.1.2. Track Marching Band appearances.

Action B2.1.3. Track performances, exhibitions, and events reaching external audience members in both on- and off-campus venues.

Goal B3: Build upon the COAA's diverse set of disciplines to catalyze interdisciplinary partnerships that address complex local and global challenges.

Obj. B3.1: Foster and grow collaborations between and across disciplines within the COAA and across the University.

Action B3.1.1. Revise intra-collegiate policies and RPT language to formally recognize and value collaborative work.

Action B3.1.2. Identify innovative opportunities to collaborate across COAA and university labs to support College initiatives, departmental/school needs, and to build student competencies and career readiness.

Action B3.1.3. Maintain collaborations between the COAA, CHESS, and the Division of Research in support of the interdisciplinary center for Community, Heritage, and the Arts (CHArt) and its evolution to a self-sustaining university center.

Action B3.1.4. Bolster research engagement with other colleges to broaden opportunities for faculty, students, and staff.

Obj. B3.2: Develop and lead community, national, and global research collaborations.

Action B3.2.1. Cultivate sustained national and international research partnerships.

Action B3.2.2. Establish secure collaboration pipelines with industry and research partners for applied manufacturing, computation, and digital archiving.

Action B3.2.3. Pursue philanthropy to support planning and construction of a new Museum and/or Center for Visual and Performing Arts to serve as a public-facing research infrastructure hub.

Obj. B3.3: Cultivate an arts-infused campus through expanded academic and public programming.

Action B3.3.1. Create an "arts-infused campus" by offering lectures, exhibitions, performances, and public workshops that engage participants from across the region.

Action B3.3.2. Develop a "presenting series" featuring prominent national figures to draw the public to the college's physical spaces.

Action B3.3.3. Diversify the delivery and accessibility of public programming to engage a broader regional audience and remove barriers to participation.

Pillar C - Driving progress in the arts and architecture through leadership and engagement in our local communities and beyond.

Goal C1. Cultivate a thriving COAA community and shared identity.

Obj. C1.1: Strengthen cross-unit relationships and collaborative cultures.

Action C1.1.1. Increase communication around scale and scope for supporting college-wide collaborative initiatives.

Action C1.1.2. Implement a centralized calendaring process across the college to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue, interdisciplinary course and research initiatives, and increased cross-departmental programming and use of the “common hour.”

Action C1.1.3. Increase opportunities for constituent feedback on COAA initiatives impacting its departments and school.

Action C1.1.4. Optimize administrative workloads and technological resources to support a thriving collaborative culture within a competitive and dynamic higher education landscape.

Obj. C1.2: Foster a sense of shared purpose, pride, and recognition to ensure a thriving COAA community.

Action C1.2.1. Develop COAA awards programming to celebrate excellence in research, teaching, and staff support.

Action C1.2.2. Increase faculty nominations for university awards.

Action C1.2.3. Create opportunities for informal social engagements to build a supportive and inclusive culture of well-being.

Goal C2. Engage the Division of Research to address college, university, and community aspirations and research goals.

Obj. C2.1: Engage the Division of Research to explore opportunities for new university centers and labs.

Action C2.1.1. Form a cross-disciplinary steering committee of faculty and staff to determine the feasibility, scope, and structure of new and/or existing centers and labs.

Action C2.1.2. Develop a sustainable business plan that identifies internal funding and needed external support for new and/or existing labs.

Action C2.1.3. Integrate community-engaged research and research projects into academic curricula to provide students with hands-on learning and meaningful connection to the community.

Obj. C2.2: Standardize college-wide processes for engaging with community requests to ensure mission alignment and operational capacity.

Action C2.2.1. Establish a formal intake process for community requests to ensure alignment with the College goals and capacity.

Action C2.2.2. Explore opportunities for a center or lab to evaluate and facilitate community requests.

Goal C3. Develop a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy that establishes the COAA as a premier cultural destination for the Charlotte region.

Obj. C3.1: Establish a comprehensive communications strategy encompassing COAA academic, programming, and research initiatives.

Action C3.1.1. Engage University Communications to grow the YouTube channel to broadcast faculty research, student performances, and creative wins to an external audience.

Action C3.1.2. Increase event marketing frequency through strategic partnerships with regional media outlets, such as WDAV, WFAE, and Q City Nerve.

Action C3.1.3. Develop and execute annual, resource-aligned marketing priorities in collaboration with department Chairs/Director.

Action C3.1.4. Strengthen digital and engagement capabilities to align with how external audiences seek engagement with the COAA and University.

Goal C4. Expand impact through strategic, philanthropic, and industry alliances.

Obj. C4.1: Secure the COAA's long-term sustainability by diversifying the funding portfolio through robust donor relations and foundation partnerships.

Action C4.1.1. Increase donor relation activity and community-based fundraising with clear reporting metrics.

Action C4.1.2. Work with the Division of Research and the University Foundation to build sustained relationships with local and national foundations to support faculty research and programming.

Action C4.1.3. Grow endowed and non-endowed funding sources that support gallery activities, artist-in-residence programs, and the care and maintenance of the university art collection.

Obj. C4.2: Deepen partnerships with K-12 schools and explore pathways that lead to UNC Charlotte and the COAA.

Action C4.2.1. Expand collaborations with professional educators.

Action C4.2.2. Expand arts offerings for area school children.

Action C4.2.3. Strengthen COAA arts education programs to deepen opportunities for impact in the K-12 arena.

Goal C5. Empower the creative workforce and foster lifelong alumni connections.

Obj. C5.1: Formalize alumni engagement through mentorship and professional networking to create lifelong connections between current students and the creative industry.

Action C5.1.1. Establish alumni mentoring programs and special events to foster lifelong professional connections.

Action C5.1.2. Partner with Career Center to provide regular student career coaching and departmental/school engagement.

Action C5.1.3. Build strategic partnerships with local businesses, non-profits, and presenting organizations for career-connected experiential learning, including internships and apprenticeships.