

THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR STUDENT LIFE

AN UNPARALLELED STUDENT EXPERIENCE



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
STUDENT LIFE

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INTRODUCTION

FROM VP JOSÉ:

Since the launch of the University of Delaware strategic plan, *Forward and Forever*, we as the Division of Student Life started planning to outline our distinctive role within that plan. While Student Life has something to contribute to all five pillars of the plan, our exploration revealed that we are relied upon to organize our work around the primary aim of student success. The access, completion and post-graduate experiences of our students must remain paramount and top of mind in all that we do.

In our efforts to explore our unique role and carefully craft this strategic plan, we conducted extensive research in the following areas:

- Articulated student needs and desires
- Evaluation of Student Life's unique contributions to student success
- Incorporation of current priorities and plans already established in the Division, such as the Advancing Racial Equity and Inclusion plan
- Input from institutional stakeholders, Student Affairs Leadership Team, members of our staff and UD students

The resulting message was clear: Student Life primarily contributes to student success by attending to the student experience. And so, our north star shines bright as we seek to create an unparalleled student experience for all Blue Hens.

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In order to create an unparalleled student experience, we have established five strategic priorities:

- Seamless student experience
- Racial equity and inclusion
- Student development for work, life and society
- Graduate student success
- Operational and organizational excellence

We are excited to put this strategy into action and hope as you read through our plan you will be inspired to join us in creating an unparalleled student experience for our students.

Sincerely,
José-Luis Riera
Vice President for Student Life





UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

The University of Delaware (UD) is one of the oldest universities in the U.S. A state-assisted land-grant, seagrant and space-grant university, UD is actively engaged in the critical needs of the state of Delaware, the nation, and the global community as a whole. Through nine colleges and a free standing school, UD offers 150 bachelor’s programs, 140 master’s programs and 60 doctoral programs. Associate degree programs are offered at locations in Wilmington, Dover and Georgetown. With total enrollment of more than 23,600, UD is the largest institution in Delaware. UD enjoys numerous recognitions including a top 100 ranking among national universities by U.S. News and World Report for its undergraduate program and a top 40 ranking among public universities. In addition, UD was recently cited by The Princeton Review as being among the top 209 higher education institutions with the highest ROI (return on investment) ratings; UD is ranked in the top three percent of all U.S. universities and colleges classified by the Carnegie Foundation, and for multiple years UD has been named by Forbes as one America’s best midsize employers.

DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE

Recently recognized as one of the “Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs” by Diverse: Issues in Higher Education, the Division of Student Life comprises 25 functional areas and more than 200 full-time staff who provide a multitude of nationally recognized co-curricular experiences and services in the areas of career readiness, engagement, equity and inclusion, and wellbeing for undergraduate and graduate students.

► For More information, visit: udel.edu/studentlife

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Top 30 “Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs” by Diverse: Issues in Higher Education
- Awarded Vector Solutions Campus Prevention Network Seal of Prevention
- Selected as member of First Scholars Network through National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)
- Career Leadership Collective Career Services Pursuit of Excellence Award

MISSION

The Division of Student Life advances racial equity and inclusion, deepens student learning, and drives holistic development through education, experiences and communities.

VISION

Lead a dynamic student experience and vibrant campus culture, so all Blue Hens thrive throughout their lives.

VALUES

- Amplify Student Voice
- Pursue Equity
- Transformational Collaboration
- Learning and Innovation
- Integrity and Respect



OUR ASPIRATION: UNPARALLELED STUDENT SUCCESS

OUR WHY

What is the aspiration of the Division of Student Life?

Success of students is the ultimate demonstration of Student Life's success and impact.

OUR FOCUS

Where will we do our work to reach our aspiration?

Deliver an unparalleled co-curricular experience that centers access, completion, and post-graduate success for undergraduate and graduate students.

OUR APPROACH

How will we accomplish our aspiration?

- Leverage Student Life's organizational structures and campus partnerships
- Communicate our story and impact on student success
- Make values based decisions
- Lead with a student-centered mindset
- Invest in our people
- Resource our priorities

"The University has expanded efforts to enhance our students' success...Meeting students' evolving needs requires robust support services that are well organized, well known and easily accessible, alongside co-curricular experiences that are intentionally integrated into the experience of each student."

- Forward and Forever, The Strategic Plan for the University of Delaware, 2022

CAPABILITIES NEEDED

What capabilities must we have?

What do we need to be distinctly good at in our focus and approach?

- Comprehensive branding and communication strategy
- Evidence-based practices and improvements
- Purposeful connections with students
- Competency focused professional development
- Intentional talent management and recruitment
- Transformational internal and external collaborative partnerships
- Culture of accountability
- Effective and integrated organizational and business operations

MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

What management processes and systems do we need?

What processes do we need to support our strategy?

- Methods to report and communicate progress
- Comprehensive and matrixed assessment plan
- Performance appraisal process connected to goals and competencies
- Stewardship and management of financial resources
- Student success measures with improvement strategies
- Connection to internal and external trends and inputs



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SEAMLESS STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Develop cohesive environments and interactions throughout the student life cycle, championing meaningful transitions, nurturing engagement, and removing barriers to success.

- Implement the Student Experience Master Plan recommendations to foster a vibrant student experience through the enhancement of campus facilities and allocation of monetary resources.
- Launch a comprehensive first-year undergraduate experience strategy extending beyond initial touch points.
- Provide scaffolded learning experiences and outcomes to extend student engagement and development for all students across the college life cycle.
- Improve the college entrance and transition experience for all undergraduate students regardless of entrance point by bolstering programming and strengthening partnerships in the admissions, matriculation, and orientation processes.
- Implement a strategic assessment plan to identify and remove barriers to student success.

RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Cultivate a sense of belonging and reduce barriers to engagement for racially and ethnically minoritized students to promote equitable student success by implementing the Advancing Racial Equity and Inclusion plan.

- Increase funding to support racially and ethnically minoritized student leaders and organizations engaging in racial justice programming.

- Embed anti-racism efforts throughout the employee life cycle for all SL staff, including standard language in position descriptions and performance appraisals, equitable salary audits, and recruitment and retention practices.
- Monitor and engage in equity-centered assessment practices to assess anti-racism efforts, uncover outcome gaps, and ensure physical spaces are welcoming.
- Develop and implement anti-racism and social justice training and professional development for students and Student Life employees, including student leaders.
- Encourage and equip students and staff to engage in personal and professional development to advance their capacity for engaging in anti-racism work.
- Review new and revise existing Student Life policies, processes, partnerships and communication to ensure they value and promote anti-racism and equity.
- Communicate Student Life's commitment and progress on advancing anti-racism efforts transparently and ensure all communications, regardless of content, convey a commitment to racial equity.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT FOR WORK, LIFE AND SOCIETY

Equip students with skills, cultural competencies, and pertinent knowledge, enabling their ability to understand and articulate the value and insights gained from their diverse experiences, ensuring their readiness for success in a dynamic global landscape.

- Craft a philosophy and approach for student leadership at UD, embedding its principles deeply within the Division's ethos.



- Infuse the principles of the [Okanagan Charter](#) into the Division, cultivating a student community rich in holistic well-being and resilience.
- Forge deeper connections between Division staff and student leaders, cultivating intentional engagements that amplify student voices from organizations.
- Establish innovative co-curricular engagement pathways to help students personalize their Delaware experience and enhance holistic advising practices.
- Design a cohesive framework that ties co-curricular experiences directly to the competencies and knowledge crucial for student and postgraduate success.

GRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS

Cultivate a campus environment that emphasizes holistic success, supports their diverse needs, and fosters a strong sense of community.

- Support, advise, and educate graduate student organizations and leaders to maximize their engagement and effectiveness.
- Develop and advance a graduate student housing strategy.
- Establish channels for graduate students to voice their concerns, ensuring prompt and effective support in addressing them.
- Implement a comprehensive graduate student life funding model.
- Evaluate strategies to effectively address the core needs of graduate students and foster graduate student belonging.
- Ensure graduate students understand that Student Life resources are intended for their use and designed to enhance their experience.

OPERATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Deepen our dedication to excellence through continuous process improvement, employee engagement, and effective communication.

- Encapsulate the unique spirit of Student Life through the art of storytelling, ensuring every message is clear and consistent, amplifying our impact across all touch points
- Leverage best practices and data-driven insights to foster informed decision-making and ensure accountability across all levels.
- Equip every team member with a robust understanding and essential resources, fostering a deep connection to their role, the Division, and the overarching University of Delaware ethos.
- Prioritize employees' holistic growth and well-being, intertwining practices that embrace feedback, cultivate a cohesive culture, champion equity and deepen interpersonal bonds.
- Establish practices prioritizing attracting and retaining top talent, leveraging effective communication, and comprehensive onboarding processes.
- Establish a robust assessment framework leveraging data to enhance our capacity and evaluate the impact of our programs and operations.
- Enhance operations by defining processes, policies, systems, guidelines, and workflows, and regularly evaluating these through a continuous improvement framework.



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
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