

College of Education Vivid Vision 2024-2027

The College of Education (COE) at Wayne State University (WSU), located in the heart of Detroit, prepares teachers, counselors, coaches, health educators, healthcare workers, principals, learning designers, exercise scientists, sports administrators, and education and health researchers to be engaged citizens and leading professionals who work toward equity, excellence, and wellbeing. The COE is committed to cultivating a highly engaged student-centered environment, where **all** students learn to thrive personally, academically, and professionally by working alongside their peers, faculty, staff, COE partners, and local communities to improve education and wellbeing on campus, in the city of Detroit, and beyond. In the COE, students do not have to wait to complete a degree to make a difference in the world because they are fully engaged in making a difference while they build the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be successful in an increasingly diverse and complex world.

The COE is a diverse educational community where students, faculty, staff, and our partners work together to create and sustain an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members. Embracing a culture of radical neighborliness, we actively engage with and support each other and our local communities by taking bold and provocative actions to foster compassion, inclusivity, social connection, and sense of the common good. We build positive relationships, offer support and resources, and advocate for the individual and collective well-being of those around us. We believe in collaborating to address social issues and create positive change within the college, university, and in our local communities. Our commitment to the practice of radical neighborliness is best articulated in our core values:

- **Equity**

The COE actively works towards reimagining and redesigning access and opportunity to ensure every member has viable pathways to success.

- **Excellence**

The COE sets high academic and professional standards, encourages intellectual curiosity, and supports a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

- **Well-being**

The COE prioritizes healthy teaching and learning environments by ensuring students, faculty, and staff access to essential resources that promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

- **Community**

The COE upholds principles of collaboration, shared responsibility, and decision-making that foster a sense of community, mutual trust, and a commitment to shared values that promote a sense of belonging and collective wellbeing.

- **Collaboration**

The students, faculty, staff, alongside COE alumni, partners, and community leaders work together to facilitate equitable educational, health, and social improvements through research, teaching, and engagement at the local, national, and global levels.

The COE has embraced and enacted these values, which have shaped an environment where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive, succeed, and contribute to the public good. In addition to our values, our work has also been guided by five commitments. We are committed to 1) creating a holistic student success strategy that ensures **all** students thrive, 2) cultivating a dynamic learning environment where research, teaching, and community collaboration and impact are highly integrated and facilitate the public good, 3) promoting life-long learning by designing a suite of affordable and accessible mini-courses and experiences that provide COE students, alumni, partners, and others an opportunity to build new skills and continually enrich their learning as leading professionals and engaged citizens, 4) investing in faculty and staff wellbeing, professional development, shared governance, and an environment where mutual respect, support, and trust define the ethos in the college, and 5) fostering highly engaged alumni and partner communities to support the COE's vision and mission. Leaning into these commitments has elevated our teaching, research, partnerships, and overall impact in the college, on the campus, and in our local communities.

Guiding Commitments

Holistic Student Success

According to data resulting from the Thriving Quotient Survey (Schreiner, 2010), which is administered to COE students annually, the overwhelming majority of COE students are in fact thriving and not just surviving their college experience. Thriving

describes the experiences of college students who are fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Thriving college students not only are academically successful,

they also experience a sense of community and a level of psychological well-being that contributes to their persistence to graduation and allows them to gain maximum benefit from being in college” (Schreiner, 2010).

The COE designed a holistic student success model that ensures **all** COE students have what they need to thrive at WSU. As a result, undergraduate students reported feeling valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential. Students reflected positive experiences with pre-college engagement, professional advising, exposure to college success resources and programming, easy access to critical information, scholarships, reliable schedules, mental health resources, and a high level of student engagement activities as things that facilitate their sense of belonging, wellbeing, and self-advocacy. They also pointed to mentor relationships with faculty, encouragement and support from staff, the highly engaged approach to teaching, and ample opportunities to be involved in community responsive problem solving through research, community collaborations, clinical experiences, leadership, and other authentic experiences that allow them to connect their learning to social impact in Detroit and beyond, and sometimes in their own neighborhoods. What students appreciate most is that they don't have to wait to make a difference in the world, because their college work is designed to actively engage them in transformative change. The COE's approach to student success has contributed to increased enrollment, retention, and completion rates in the college, particularly among students matriculating from Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD).

The COE's student success strategy has not only enhanced the undergraduate experience, it has also significantly improved the graduate student experience. While COE graduate students have mostly highlighted their courses and support from faculty and advisors as significant aspects of their ability to succeed in their respective programs, the COE has improved the overall experience by ensuring that our students have what they need to flourish in a tough job market. The COE has elevated the graduate student experience by focusing on flexible formats and scheduling, clear communication, cohorts and community building, access to research funding and conference presentations, providing opportunities for all doctoral students to teach, supporting graduate student with workshops, writing retreats, national networking, and other experiences that expand their personal and professional skills. These improvements have made our graduate programs at both the masters and doctoral levels more attractive. Enrollment in our masters programs has increased. Time to graduation in our doctoral programs has decreased. And all of our graduates report feeling confident and prepared to successfully

navigate a highly competitive job market.

In the COE, we understand that the world is always changing and so are our students. Thus, our holistic student success strategy is facilitated by a process of continuous improvement. We regularly seek input and feedback from our students to determine how we can continue to discern where we can adjust, elevate, and innovate to ensure that our holistic student success strategy supports **all** students as they reach their goals and potentials.

Integrated Community Engagement

Our commitment to an integrated community engagement strategy builds on our student success strategy by providing more opportunities for students to work **with** COE partners, community leaders, faculty, and staff in order to enhance their learning, while helping to increase equity and access to education and physical and mental well-being in the metro Detroit area. The COE has a long history of engaging in community responsive and sustaining research and teaching. In the past three years, the COE has sought to build on this legacy by advancing the idea of full participation. In higher education, full participation is “a way of conceptualizing student and faculty (and staff) diversity, community engagement, and academic success as a nexus for the transformation of communities on and off campus” (Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh & Bush, 2010). Working in partnership with DPSCD and a network of other agencies and community-based organizations, the COE has been able to 1) increase the number of courses connected to/invested in community responsive and sustaining work and 2) increase opportunities for students and faculty to participate in community responsive and sustaining research with community leaders. Integrating community engagement across the curriculum and into research opportunities have resulted in a number of key benefits.

Enhanced Learning: Integrating community engagement as a core aspect of teaching, learning, and research has provided students with opportunities to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life situations. This strategy has exposed COE students to more experiential learning opportunities, where they hone critical thinking and problem-solving skills, while learning from, supporting, and giving back to community-led initiatives.

Personal and Professional Development: Engaging with our local communities has helped students develop a sense of civic responsibility, empathy, and social awareness. It has also exposed them to diverse communities, experiences, and perspectives, increasing cross-cultural understanding, inclusivity, and appreciation for diversity, while also requiring them to practice

leadership, communication, project management, and advocacy skills.

Networking: Through community engagement, students have built connections with community members, organizations and professionals who are working on improving education and wellbeing. In many cases, these networks have led to internships, job opportunities, mentorship, and life-long commitments to community engagement work.

Community Impact: The integrated community engagement strategy has allowed COE students, faculty and staff to work alongside community-based organizations to improve education and well-being with and for local residents, which has, in turn, enriched pedagogy, curricula, and research in the college.

Research Acumen: The increased emphasis on collaborative, interdisciplinary, community-based research led by faculty and inclusive of students has increased participation in undergraduate research and made research acumen a signature part of the COE experience.

Research Footprint and Impact: Doing community engaged and community responsive research with community leaders, community organizations, and other partners has increased community trust in the COE and resulted in increased interest among funders, policy advocates, and future partners.

Overall, the emphasis on integrated community engagement has benefited the entire COE, our students, faculty, and staff. The opportunity for more hands-on learning and undergraduate research opportunities has increased students' sense of preparedness and also enrollment, retention and graduation rates. More undergraduate and graduate students are acquiring advanced research skills by working alongside and supporting faculty research, and as a result faculty are better positioned to deepen and/or expand their work. Moreover, the commitment to working on community based collaborations has significantly enhanced the awareness of all the work in the COE and in Detroit communities that contribute to building educational capacity and well-being. The COE has many new partnerships that continue to elevate our teaching and research in ways that promote equity, excellence, and wellbeing in the COE and in/with local communities.

Life-long Learning

Over the past 3 years, the COE has made a significant investment increasing opportunity and accessibility in the area of life-long learning through our suite of microcredentials that offer highly flexible, targeted, and cost-effective approaches to learning specific skills and knowledge. Our thoughtful and strategic approach to microcredentials has had a positive impact on our

student success efforts, as we have offered prospective and current students the opportunity to explore interests, build specific skills, and increase their employability. Our suite also includes microcredentials customized with and for COE partners, including schools, organizations, and agencies related to education and health equity, who are committed to finding affordable ways to keep their employees and volunteers well prepared to meet rapidly evolving workplace demands. Finally, the COE has also opened our microcredentials suite to alumni and other professionals who have benefited from the expertise of the COE faculty and staff that are of critical importance to today's world (from exercise science to bilingual education to trauma informed pedagogy to AI in K-12 classrooms). This effort has resulted not only in improved student success, increased partner collaborations, and a steady increase in masters enrollment.

Faculty and Staff Flourishing

The COE is committed to creating an environment that enables all of its members, whatever their identity, background, or position, to thrive, realize their capabilities, engage meaningfully in institutional life, and contribute to the flourishing of others (adapted from Sturm, 2010). All members of the COE community are equally valued for their interdependent part in our student experience and our central mission. We all feel connected to each other and to something bigger than ourselves. We feel supported and valued for our unique contributions to overall well being and success of the COE. There is a spirit of collegiality, collaboration, and trust. The default assumption about each other is a spirit of generosity, good intention, and good will. All of us fundamentally love the work, and we feel joy in it and in being here. And it shows! The COE is committed to building and maintaining a diverse faculty and staff body, emphasizing relationship development, responsiveness to each other, and to students at all levels, and reliability in meeting students and each other's needs for connection and a shared ultimate purpose. The faculty, staff and students in the COE take full advantage of learning opportunities that enhance our commitments to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Justice (DEIAJ). We are committed to engaging in restorative practices that help us heal from past trauma and injustice, practice radical neighborliness, and invest in individual and collective flourishing.

Alumni and Partner Engagement

COE Alumni along with our campus and community partners are a tremendous resource in helping the college to reach its fullest potential. By fostering strong and active alumni and partner communities, we have created mutually beneficial collaborations that contribute to the growth and success of the COE. The COE's Alumni Engagement Board has contributed to the

college by 1) creating programming that brings alumni to campus to engage with faculty, staff and students several times throughout the year, 2) sharing valuable professional insights to support the COE's efforts to ensure that our curricula are meeting the demands of the professions and 3) connecting the college with community partners. The COE's Partnership Council is composed of a diverse group of community partners who come together to help advance the COE's partnership network. The council has been instrumental in helping the COE 1) establish our partnership principles, 2) making the COE aware of community needs, and 3) facilitating new partnerships. In appreciation for the efforts of alumni and partners, the COE has created new awards designed to recognize the contributions of alumni and community partners to the advancement of the COE's vision and mission. These engagement efforts have positively impacted the COE by 1) increased funding from development efforts and 2) increased opportunities for COE students to be actively engaged with and garnering professional knowledge from alumni and partners.

Sharing and Celebrating the Good News

In the COE, we understand that it is vitally important that we share not only our vision and plan, but that we also publicly share our efforts and progress toward fulfilling our commitments and the impact our work has on the evolution of the COE and on the education and health equity landscape. As such, the COE has dedicated significant resources to high impact storytelling. Over the last three years, we have worked diligently to craft compelling narratives that 1) showcase our distinctive qualities, values, and achievements 2) elevate community-based and asset-driven research methodologies and 3) establish a strong brand identity that resonates with students, parents, donors, and others. Through storytelling, we highlight student success, share faculty expertise, and share compelling stories about how COE's collaborations and contributions improve the quality of education and health on campus and in our local communities. We have engaged storytelling across a variety of platforms including the website, social media, podcasts, annual reports, newsletters for partners and alumni, and other such efforts. The COE's dedication to high impact storytelling has significantly improved awareness of the college's commitment to student success and to educational equity and well-being through transformative teaching, research, and community collaborations. Through these efforts, the high quality and value of an educational and workplace experience in the COE is shared widely.