

Our Strategic Plan

May 20, 2010

In [previous issues](#) of On the Same Page, I shared with you the process we have undertaken to create a Strategic Plan for our academic health center (Sept. 30, 2009), and provided aspects of the plan as it unfolded (Jan. 13, 2010 and April 30, 2010). In this installment, I'm happy to report we have completed the Strategic Plan for UF&Shands. Please read on for a summary of the highlights.

The Strategic Plan for UF&Shands 1) specifies an overarching set of principles that will guide the future of our academic health center and 2) details plans of the individual colleges, institutes, centers and hospitals that are designed to optimize health care, education and research guided by these principles. In this issue of On the Same Page, I will try to articulate the overarching principles in a manner that provides insight into the thought process of our Strategic Planning Cabinet members, who are listed at the end of the report.

The overarching theme of the Strategic Plan is “Forward Together.” This reflects the recognition that we can move forward most effectively only if the UF Health Science Center and Shands HealthCare work together in a coordinated and collaborative fashion. Our new logo and descriptor, pictured below, drive home this point: replacing the blue ampersand with an orange one reflects the connection with UF and The Gator Nation, and replacing “University of Florida Health System” with “University of Florida Academic Health Center” more accurately describes the breadth of our missions.



Thus, UF&Shands represents not only the clinical system but the entire academic health center. UF&Shands comprises two distinct entities — the University of Florida and Shands HealthCare — working in a closely collaborative fashion to improve health through education, research and patient care. The UF Health Science Center and Shands HealthCare are not integrated in a unified joint venture; rather, we remain as separate entities, each of which recognizes it will advance its own goals most effectively through close collaboration with the other. (As such, we will soon issue guidelines for the proper use of the new UF&Shands logo.)

A key driver has been identified for each of our missions. With respect to our clinical mission, highest-quality patient care and patient safety are first and foremost. Unless we get this right, we will not reach our goals in research and education. We will strive for top-10 status in quality and safety among the 93 hospitals participating in the University HealthSystem Consortium (UHC). Our strategies for achieving this goal include partnership between HSC faculty and Shands, alignment between clinical programs and new inpatient and ambulatory facilities, and most important, establishing a culture of quality and safety that extends to every member of our hospital and Health Science Center community, both in Gainesville and Jacksonville.

In research, the driver is to reach high. We aim to achieve top-10 ranking in NIH funding in at least 10 scientific fields, while generating broad-based, consistent and durable growth across the entire portfolio of fundamental, translational and clinical research. We will recruit faculty investigators who are at the very top of their fields. For all research faculty, both newly recruited and current investigators, resources (dollars and space) will be allocated and reallocated based on maximizing both scientific impact and grant funding per dollar of support. We are fortunate to be in a position where a substantial amount of state-of-the-art research space has opened up in the past several years, and we can look forward to building new research facilities in both laboratory research and in clinical and translational research over the next 24 to 36 months.

In education, the driver is to take greatest advantage of our unique combination of colleges, hospitals and governance structure to become a national model for education in the health sciences and health professions. We will ensure that discipline-specific curricular needs for each college are addressed in focused areas of scientific knowledge and patient care skills. Moreover, in graduate study we ensure that our trainees can take advantage of the applied and translational opportunities for biomedical discovery and clinical application. We will also ensure that our students, across all disciplines, master key competencies in the areas of interpersonal communication, professionalism, teamwork, system-based knowledge, and the evaluation of scientific and clinical evidence. With students being educated in all of the health sciences and professions, we have a unique opportunity to develop a national benchmark for how to achieve these core competencies.

Two important aspects of the plan that encompass all mission areas are commitments to improving diversity at UF&Shands, and to improving health in the population we serve. In all that we do — patient care, education, community health and research — we will be more effective if our faculty, students, residents and staff are reflective of the gender, racial and cultural diversity of the populations we serve. During the upcoming year, we will first assess the current status of our faculty, students, residents and staff with respect to gender, race and ethnicity, and then compare these data against national benchmarks. In parallel, we will determine from our current community of minorities and women the barriers that may exist for recruitment, retention and promotion, and develop strategies to overcome these barriers. On a yearly basis thereafter, we will mark our progress in improving diversity at UF&Shands, and refine our tactics to ensure continued improvement.

Ultimately, although as clinicians many of us are trained to focus attention on the prevention or treatment of disease one patient at a time, the goal of our research, educational and direct clinical efforts is to improve the overall health of the populations we serve. Community health is an integral part of each of our other missions. Factors that affect the health of populations will be emphasized in our health science educational programs, alongside factors impacting the health of an individual. Research methods for studying the health of populations and of individuals will be strengthened. And finally, a key part of our clinical mission is to provide access to needed health care for all members of the Gainesville community and in underserved areas of Florida. Thus, we will continue to locate clinical practices involving faculty in nursing, dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and the health professions in those areas where access may be limited.

How will we pay for all of this? Despite the national and global economic downturn and uncertain implications of health-care reform, I am convinced that the future looks bright for UF&Shands in successfully accomplishing an ambitious strategic plan. Our commitment to highest-quality patient care and patient safety, new clinical facilities and plans for new ambulatory sites should generate the clinical financial margins needed to invest in our clinical, research and education missions. We will work with our philanthropic supporters on aspects of the strategic plan about which they are passionate. We will work with our scientists to identify opportunities for center and program project-level grant funding, funding from foundations and industry, and for technology commercialization. And we will continue to work with our legislators to ensure that the state of Florida supports our academic programs at current or increased levels in recognition of the tremendous benefit that its investment to date has reaped.

Please visit our [Forward Together](#) Website for more details, including the full text of the Strategic Plan for our academic health center. Information on the college- and unit-level strategic plans that link to our overarching document also will be posted here as they are finalized.

When I first arrived in Gainesville last July, I was amazed at the opportunity afforded by the strengths of this great university and health system, and by the uniquely powerful set of resources that can be directed at improving health through education, research and patient care. As I learned more, I became even more amazed. We can do this.

Forward Together,

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