

Embracing R2: Implementation Plan Based on Recommendations from the Doctoral Transition Task Force

James J. Winebrake, Provost & Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs
Stuart R. Borrett, Associate Provost for Research and Innovation

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1 Introduction

The 2020 [Doctoral Transition Task Force \(DTTF\) Final Report](#) made dozens of recommendations to guide UNCW's embrace of its new status as a *Doctoral University: High Research Activity* (R2). These recommendations focus on strengthening our research culture and scholarship across UNCW, and improving campus operations to better support growing research and graduate education. Many of the DTTF recommendations specifically support increasing externally-sponsored research, which is critically important for (1) expanding applied learning opportunities for all students; (2) supporting doctoral programs; (3) addressing key problems within our community and our nation; and, (4) ensuring the continued evolution of UNCW into a more research-intensive university. The growth of sponsored research is also a success metric for the *UNCW Strategic Plan 2016-2021*.

Based on the *DTTF Final Report*, as well as input from other campus stakeholders, this document presents a five-point framework to embrace UNCW's R2 status and to guide the next phase of support for enhancing and expanding UNCW research activity and graduate education.

2 Five-Point Framework

Point 1: Providing Incentives and Support for Research Activity

This set of programs will encourage and support additional research activity on campus. The following are specific program examples.

- **Awards and Recognition** – New awards to recognize excellence in research, scholarship, creative works, and innovation, as well as research-related mentorship and leadership. The Faculty Senate Research Committee has been asked to propose two new awards.
- **Sponsored Research Support Program** – A competitive program to provide internal support for faculty developing proposals for external funding; internal awards may cover a variety of expenses, including course release time. Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance (SPARC) implemented this program this Fall 2020 as [Momentum Funds](#).
- **Kickstart Program** - A competitive funding pool for new researchers (typically less than 3 years at UNCW) to help support research engagement, proposal writing, etc.

- **Signature Research Programs** – A program to identify 3-5 major interdisciplinary *Signature Research Areas* for UNCW in which to invest and target growth.

Point 2: Adjusting Faculty Workload & Compensation

The second point of the implementation framework is an overall review and revision of faculty workload led by the Provost and Deans that is designed to ensure more time for research, scholarship, and creative works. This effort will align UNCW policy with [UNC Policy \(400.3.4\)](#), and respond directly to the other workload recommendations in the *DTTF Final Report*. This work includes revisions to Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion as well as Post Tenure Review, and will require critical engagement with faculty governance. Under this point, we will also work with Business Affairs, HR, and Academic Affairs Resource Management to review compensation and determine how necessary adjustments can be made to make UNCW salaries more competitive with peer institutions.

Point 3: Developing New Academic Programs

The mutually-beneficial, positive feedback loop between academic programs and research programs is part of the promise of research universities. To successfully grow UNCW research, scholarship, and creative work, UNCW should strategically grow undergraduate, master's, and Ph.D. level programs aligned with growing areas of research strengths. Ideally, these will also be well aligned and mutually reinforcing with growing sectors of the regional, state, and national economy.

Point 4: Supporting Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars

The fourth component of the implementation plan will focus on growing graduate student support including more stipends and competitive graduate student stipends and benefits. This point also includes a focus on growing Postdoctoral Research Associate support. Research is a critical learning tool for students and postdocs, and students and postdocs are key members of the research workforce.

Point 5: Building Research Infrastructure

Growing research at UNCW requires continued improvement to the research infrastructure. This point includes the physical infrastructure of buildings, equipment, supplies, Information Technology support, Office of General Council, and Library support, and UNCW needs a special focus on the research administration (e.g., SPARC, RIO, OIC) structure aimed at improving operations and customer service. This critical infrastructure also includes UNCW's research policies and business process. This point also includes support for research centers, institutes, and core facilities, which are helpful for catalyzing research.

3 Conclusion

This five-point framework is proposed as a strategic first step to implementing the recommendations of the DTTF. It recognizes the importance of strategically aligning multiple efforts to expand research and scholarship activities at UNCW and deepening the campus research culture. This framework also introduces processes that will take time to implement and fully accomplish our goals. Some of the actions such as the Sponsored Programs Support Program (Momentum Funds) will be quick to implement;

others will take longer to fully accomplish. The DTF report and this framework provides an initial road map for UNCW's journey to embracing its *High Research Activity* status.

The Associate Provost for Research and Innovation (APRI) has been charged to lead the *Embracing R2* implementation effort, recognizing that success will require teamwork across campus. The APRI will communicate with the campus community regularly about the implementation progress.

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