

PREEMINENCE 2030: **NORTH CAROLINA A&T BLUEPRINT**

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LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

In 2010, North Carolina A&T began work on its first strategic plan of the 21st century – “A&T Preeminence 2020: Embracing Our Past, Creating Our Future” – it was clear that it would be a plan like none before. The plan articulated six major goals that directed significant action to enhance A&T’s academic foundation and intellectual climate. The plan charged A&T to develop as a premiere research institution and be recognized for its scientific strengths among top research universities across the country.

Preeminence 2020 captured our collective will and inspired us to bring our best to the arena. Our journey to preeminence required a leap of faith for some who wondered whether a medium-sized university in Greensboro could live up to its lofty ambitions in a crowded, competitive higher education marketplace. By 2018, having surpassed many of its outcome targets, the plan was refreshed with new thinking and higher goals. That revision, “A&T Preeminence: Taking the Momentum to 2023,” blazed the path to important further progress.

For those who mustered the faith and applied fortitude, the past 12 years of implementation have been nothing short of remarkable. Consider:

- Strong enrollment growth elevated A&T to the no. 1 spot in 2014 as the nation’s largest historically Black college or university, a highly visible position it has held ever since. In fact, between 2011 and 2021, applications to A&T grew by 246%, by far the highest growth rate of any campus in the UNC System and surpassed by only one other HBCU nationally. At an enrollment of 13,487, A&T is now the largest of any HBCU, past or present. This occurred at a time when similar campuses across the country were losing students.
- The Campaign for North Carolina A&T, the university’s first comprehensive fundraising effort, went public in 2017 with a goal of \$85 million. Over the next three years, explosive growth in private support for A&T exceeded the goal, which was raised to \$100 million – and then significantly exceeded the new goal. By its conclusion at the end of 2020, the campaign had taken in \$181.4 million and added significantly to A&T’s endowment, which today stands at more than \$160 million.
- The university’s intentional development as a doctoral research institution took more time to flourish, but in 2020-21, A&T faculty mounted a significant leap forward, earning 30% more in research funding than the prior year. In 2021-22, A&T research funding grew substantially for the second straight year, now to \$97.3 million in competitive awards and up by 62% over a two-year span. Progress in grant applications and awards in the current year may well see A&T exceed last year’s record. The university has definitively moved into a new position that holds great promise for its interest in attaining the Carnegie Foundation’s top classification for doctoral, research universities: R1 – Very High Research Activity.

These important examples were accompanied by hundreds of other points of progress across the university, few of which would have come to pass absent our foresight to create and execute a plan that required us to collectively stretch.

“Preeminence 2030: North Carolina A&T Blueprint” acknowledges the disciplined work and accomplishments of the previous 12 years, while charting a new vision to guide it through the next decade. The plan commits A&T to bold goals that will make it more effective and a more impactful university: a university that will use its teaching, research and service to help foster innovation that positively affects the human condition and economic growth, and thereby bringing value to the constituents and communities it serves.

The world is calling with many diverse challenges. Through this plan, we will answer that call in a spirit of agency that centers us as influencers, knowledge producers and thought leaders, bringing meaningful and authentic perspectives to serve the under-served; to speak for the unheard; and to act for those who have been marginalized and constrained.

We are proud to present herein the ideas, goals, strategies and accountability measures that define this new blueprint. And we look forward to working with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and supporters of A&T to turn the ideas articulated in the plan into a bold new reality.

Sincerely,

Hilda Pinnix-Ragland
Chair, Board of Trustees

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Chancellor

ABOUT

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University is rapidly emerging as one of this nation's preeminent institutions of higher education. With a proud history and an undeniably bright future, North Carolina A&T will continue to redefine what a doctoral, land-grant, historically Black research university can be in the 21st century.

As the nation's largest HBCU, North Carolina A&T makes unparalleled contributions to the representation of African Americans in key professions and in strategic leadership positions across the nation and to the scientific and public understanding of the world around us. It is an economic force for good in North Carolina, educating the workforce of the future, supporting businesses from small farms to high-tech entrepreneurial ventures, and having an annual economic impact across the state of \$1.5 billion.

A&T now stands poised to expand its impact, boldly addressing societal challenges and challenging prevailing notions, theories and practices. Through transformation initiatives currently underway and through the innovative goals, strategies and outcome measures within this plan, A&T is well prepared and emboldened to facilitate critical social change.

A&T was established as an 1890 land-grant college, only the second of its kind. From a modest start in 1891 in Raleigh, North Carolina, it has overcome historic and abiding challenges to become a vibrant national university, with a high-achieving student body comprised of 13,487 students in 2022-23. Twelve years ago, the average GPA of its entering first-year class was 3.0; today, with 3,000 more students, it is 3.77 (and climbing). A&T's diverse entering classes consistently include more African American students than the top 10 national research universities in U.S. News & World Report combined, as well as large populations of first-generation-in-college and low-income students.

Academic opportunities that draw talented students to A&T are many. The College of Engineering has long been known as the nation's no. 1 producer of Black engineers; it is now joined by the colleges of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, which led the nation over the past two years in graduation of Black students in agriculture, liberal arts and journalism. Graduate programs in the Willie A. Deese College of Business and Economics, Rehabilitation Counseling in the College of Education and Industrial and Systems Engineering are ranked among the nation's top 100 such programs in U.S. News & World Report. Meanwhile, programs in the College of Science and Technology, the John and Kathy Hairston College of Health and Human Sciences and the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering are A&T's fastest growing and connect to numerous high-demand STEM careers and critical-need professions in North Carolina and beyond.

Because of its academic programs and related strengths, A&T often leads rankings as the top-rated HBCU in North Carolina and/or the United States. As a result of the highly effective educational experience at A&T, it also ranks among the nation's top 50 universities in social mobility,

graduating students into careers that truly transform their lives, their family's circumstances and their communities. The university's size and quality are a potent combination for institutional success and delivering social-justice impact.

Faculty excellence at A&T is ably illustrated by two major prizes earned in 2022: The James Holshouser Award for Excellence in Public Service and the O. Max Gardner Award for outstanding contributions to the human race -- the top two faculty honors conferred by the UNC Board of Governors. This achievement marks the first time that two faculty members from the same campus won both awards in the same year.

Faculty excellence is in further evident in research funding, which has grown by an incredible 60% over the past two years, surpassing \$97 million in FY22. The competitive awards that comprise that growth underwrite a fascinating range of faculty-led projects, from developing air and land-based autonomous vehicles to creation of a mini-brain model to research Alzheimer's treatments. Outstanding administrative and academic staff, many drawn to A&T through its Faculty and Staff of the Future Initiative, play critical leadership and support roles across campus, further contributing its success. A&T continues to be one of North Carolina's top three public research universities.

Informed by the history and accomplishments noted above, this strategic plan is supported by seven academic and research focus areas representing A&T's strengths and impact:

- **HEALTH, TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING EQUITY**
Seeking innovative solutions is in our DNA. Through research and engagement, we impact the health and wellness of communities, particularly comprising people of color and other marginalized groups. We seek to confront persistent disparities that continue to effect qualify of life and longevity of the individuals and communities we serve.
- **EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**
In a nation challenged to provide meaningful access to high-quality education, we lead by advancing culturally responsive pedagogy and producing outstanding educators, including Black and Brown, male and STEM educators, all of whom are underrepresented in grades pre K-12. This commitment helps ensure more first-generation students and students of color pursue education beyond high school. We further lead in creating evidence-based, lifelong educational pathways compatible with the needs of underserved learners.
- **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**
Our scholarship recognizes that barriers to participation in the workforce, economic progress and wealth creation continue to impact communities of color in ways that lead to inequity. We use our expanding capabilities in social sciences, data science and community engagement to identify and remove barriers to employment opportunities and unleash entrepreneurial potential and personal agency, improving work conditions and building wealth in North Carolina for all citizens.
- **CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT**
We care about the Earth through environmental justice and our ability to safely sustain it for future generations. We engage individuals in rural and urban communities on

preserving our natural resources and ensuring a safe food supply, clean air and water, and equal humanitarian support in response to global climate changes.

- **SECURITY, EQUAL BENEFITS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The right to privacy protections for personal data, the right to benefit positively from mathematical models and algorithms and the right to safety and security should be diffused to all populations, regardless of who they are or where they live. We will continue to explore these emerging challenges in equal protections, security equity, and algorithmic justice by creating new methodologies, analytical methods and tools to eliminate the potential for negative impacts on the human condition.

- **NARRATIVE EMPOWERMENT**

At A&T, we tell authentic stories and empower the voices of the “unheard” through visual and performing arts, individual expression and representation. We work toward eradicating narrative and linguistic bias and supporting creative expression that eliminates barriers to critical thinking and that values diverse lived experiences.

- **FRONTIER SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN**

A&T’s development as a science- and technology-focused institution enables it to lead in interdisciplinary research and generate new knowledge and translational practices. We challenge prevailing notions and practices to advance thoughtful innovation in the design, development and advancement of technologies and systems to benefit a broad range of populations.

MISSION, VISION, CORE VALUES & THE AGGIE EXPERIENCE

MISSION

An 1890 land-grant, doctoral, high research activity university, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University prepares students to advance the human condition and facilitate economic growth in North Carolina and beyond by providing a preeminent and diverse educational experience through teaching, research and scholarly application of knowledge.

VISION

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University is a preeminent land-grant institution where high-achieving scholars are engaged in transformative teaching and learning, civic outreach, interdisciplinary research and innovative solutions to global challenges.

CORE VALUES

Principles that guide our actions and commitment to North Carolina A&T:

- **Responsibility.** We hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of performance for the success of the university.
- **Excellence.** We demonstrate high quality and attention to detail in all our endeavors.
- **Integrity.** We uphold moral character and unwavering ethical behavior.
- **Inclusiveness.** We commit to diversity and demonstrate inclusiveness as we work together for the advancement of the university and the world.
- **Learning.** We cultivate a culture of intellectual inquiry, personal growth and achievement.

THE AGGIE EXPERIENCE

The Aggie Experience is the root of our organizational culture – a culture of excellence. Launched in 2022, an institutional initiative of the same name recognizes our commitment to create a liberating and empowering experience for all and an environment that speaks to our right to be the very best. The Aggie Experience requires that we apply our core values in advancing the university, and that we serve, treat and teach others with respect and excellence. It demands that we use feedback for continuous improvement in business processes, implement best practices in our work throughout our university and measure our efficacy in the range of strategies and tactics required to meet our standard of excellence.

The ethos behind this initiative was foremost in the minds of the creators of this plan.

GOALS, STRATEGIES & METRICS

This strategic plan embraces North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University's vision of transforming lives through teaching and learning, civic outreach, interdisciplinary research and innovative solutions to global challenges. It is driven by the university's five core values: Responsibility, Excellence, Integrity, Inclusiveness and Learning. "Preeminence 2030: North Carolina A&T Blueprint" identifies five new goals to guide the university's development through 2030. Anticipating an accelerating pace of technological, governmental, workplace and social change that persists into the future, we will assess and refresh the plan during the 2026-27 academic year.

TRANSFORMATIVE ENGAGEMENT

GOAL 1: Create partnerships and solutions that advance the human condition

North Carolina A&T will increase its impact through cross-disciplinary engagement that leads to life-changing advances, improving social, economic, health and educational conditions.

STRATEGIES

- 1.1: Prepare students, faculty and staff to lead in areas of critical need
- 1.2: Spur economic development through an entrepreneurial ecosystem driven by startup ventures, public-private partnerships and transformative technologies
- 1.3: Strengthen outreach, engagement and community-focused research capabilities across all disciplines
- 1.4: Diversify the university's revenue and resource base to build financial strength and provide flexible funds for strategic investment
- 1.5: Grow relationships with significant business concerns locating or expanding in North Carolina to increase opportunities for students, support applied research and enhance communities in East Greensboro, the Piedmont Triad and statewide

METRICS

- o New alumni employment in high-impact careers in the region, state and nation
- o Graduate and undergraduate degree, certificate and training programs in critical-need areas
- o External partnerships resulting in joint ventures and technology transfer
- o Economic impact in the region and state
- o Alumni retention in the state after graduation
- o Student and faculty involvement in entrepreneurial ventures
- o Multidisciplinary, community-focused research partnerships
- o External funding, patents and licenses
- o National recognition for community engagement in areas of distinction
- o Active participation in community outreach and engagement

LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

GOAL 2: Develop engaged global thought leaders and innovators

North Carolina A&T will expand efforts to prepare students and faculty/staff to be impactful solution-oriented thinkers and doers, fostering rich learning environments that stimulate intellectual and creative exchange with stakeholders.

STRATEGIES

- 2.1: Design and deliver transformative curricula to elevate the next generation of global influencers and innovators
- 2.2: Prepare a community of faculty, staff and students to be cross-disciplinary thinkers by engaging in innovative scholarship marked by critical and creative thinking
- 2.3: Recruit, retain and develop highly skilled, visionary faculty and staff to prepare students for impact through experiential learning, solution-focused research, creative endeavors and community engagement
- 2.4: Design and implement living-and-learning environments that foster community and support student success and overall well-being
- 2.5: Foster rich learning and working environments that stimulate intellectual and creative exchange with all stakeholders

METRICS

- o Globally relevant, cross-disciplinary degree and certificate programs
- o Student placement rates
- o Faculty recruitment and retention rates
- o Graduate degrees awarded
- o Cross-disciplinary research and outreach programs
- o Engagement in experiential teaching and learning
- o Living-learning campus communities
- o Distinguished speaker series and visiting scholar exchanges
- o Student, faculty and staff recognition via regional, state, national and international awards
- o Student, faculty and staff satisfaction with the learning and working environment
- o Pass rates on licensure and certification exams

PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

GOAL 3: Optimize human and physical capital to drive elite performance and operational excellence

North Carolina A&T will emphasize a more complete, campus-wide embrace and embodiment of its core values to increase cohesion and effectiveness of the university's workforce. This will facilitate sustainable improvements in infrastructure and core processes for the execution of daily operations, as well as learning and research activities.

STRATEGIES

- 3.1: Enhance facilities related to IT connectivity and smart systems by continuously expanding the IT infrastructure for the campus
- 3.2: Optimize critical institutional practices, processes, policies and procedures for greater efficiency and effectiveness
- 3.3: Enhance campus infrastructure to support the execution of impactful daily operational functions
- 3.4: Attract, recruit, develop and retain a future-forward workforce through continuation of the Faculty of the Future initiative
- 3.5: Foster a climate that promotes a culture of well-being
- 3.6: Institutionalize a culture of excellence through The Aggie Experience
- 3.7: Compete with distinction and honor among elite institutions

METRICS

- o Investments in salaries and incentives for faculty and staff
- o Investments in graduate student assistantship compensation and tuition support
- o Ratings for the Student Satisfaction Survey and Faculty Engagement Survey
- o Participation rates of faculty/staff engagement in professional development activities
- o Investments in systems, IT infrastructure and training that promote effective, efficient practices
- o Investments in renovating, building new campus facilities with innovative learning spaces
- o Campus participation in wellness activities
- o Optimized faculty workload to facilitate transition to R1
- o Creative and innovative implementation of processes and procedure
- o Academic and athletic achievements, rankings, awards and championships

COLLABORATIVE AND INCLUSIVE CULTURE

GOAL 4: Foster an environment that values individualities and lived experiences so all are empowered to become their best selves

North Carolina A&T will create more inclusive living and working environments that unleash the potential of all to confidently pursue greater innovation and outcomes. In those environments, immutable and defining characteristics of each member of the community will be valued and appreciated, fostering a sense of belonging and engagement. Fertile learning and teaching environments will be developed through synergies created by collaboration among kindred and divergent perspectives, leading to the discovery and application of new knowledge.

STRATEGIES

- 4.1: Stimulate the growth of cultural competencies for students, faculty, and staff through opportunities for collaboration, inclusion and engagement
- 4.2: Create diverse, inclusive and culturally centered, next-generation academic programs and initiatives that address human challenges
- 4.3: Build a workplace culture that advances and supports the development of students, faculty and staff through diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) initiatives
- 4.4: Promote and encourage diversity of perspectives through valuing experiential learning in inclusive, authentic and holistic learning environments
- 4.5: Create an environment in which innovation is valued and “failing forward,” seen as a potential step toward success

METRICS

- o Institutional DEIB initiatives
- o Students engaging in diverse experiential learning opportunities
- o Faculty, staff and student positive perception of campus climate
- o Integration of DEIB principles in academic and professional development programs
- o Access to students from rural and underserved communities
- o Student loan debt and expenses at graduation

RESPONSIVE SCHOLARSHIP AND IMPACT

GOAL 5: Emerge as a global model for research, teaching, learning, outreach and innovation responsive to universal needs

North Carolina A&T will be a culturally responsive R1 institution that addresses technical, social, cultural, educational and economic challenges impacting all through transformation initiatives and globally relevant programs.

STRATEGIES

- 5.1: Lead intensive research in areas that address technical, social, cultural, environmental, educational and economic challenges
- 5.2: Foster innovative educational modalities that advance knowledge, teaching, training and workforce development
- 5.3: Promote collaborative, cross-disciplinary research and creative scholarship that is responsive and meaningful to the needs of the local, state, national and global communities
- 5.4: Disseminate innovative models to influence teaching, research, innovation and engagement practices
- 5.5: Expand research partnerships that align with strategic areas of expertise

METRICS

- o R1 Carnegie status
- o Research expenditures
- o Industry sponsored research projects
- o Faculty recognition for teaching, research and outreach excellence
- o Number of cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary initiatives
- o Patents, newly filed and active, and licensed innovations
- o Research-based startup ventures
- o Faculty and student exchanges and collaborations
- o Visiting scholars
- o Peer reviewed publications and creative works
- o Extension and outreach programming
- o Innovation in administrative units
- o Investments in graduate assistantships

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In the fall of 2021, North Carolina A&T announced its goal to build upon the success of “A&T Preeminence: Taking the Momentum to 2023” through a new strategic plan. University stakeholders, both internal and external, collaborated on its creation through a strategic planning committee. Efforts to ensure creativity and alignment of vision created the foundation for the committee to have dynamic exchange.

Through an intense process of engagement, a new mission statement emerged from the group’s work, and in spring 2022, it was approved by the UNC System Board of Governors. With that foundational element in place, the strategic planning committee set about creating a plan that would be distinguished by three areas of emphasis: bold impact, diversity of thought and a data-informed process.

The new strategic plan involved five phases of development:

- Phase 1 - Launch (January - March 2022)
- Phase 2 - Discovery (April - June 2022)
- Phase 3 - Draft and Review (July - September 2022)
- Phase 4 - Finalize and Verify (October - December 2022)
- Phase 5 - Review and Approve (January - February 2023)

Bold Impact. The compelling needs of the local community, the state of North Carolina and beyond were the key considerations for the committees to examine data that addresses the high-impact global concerns. Enhancing the lives of the citizenry by providing innovative solutions that serve as catalysts to expand North Carolina A&T’s impact is the goal of this strategic plan.

Diversity of Thought. In developing a comprehensive strategic plan, incorporation of the varying perspectives of A&T’s community members and key stakeholders was vital. Seven cross-functional committees were established with an additional small core committee to serve as an integrator for all committees. Three committees were externally focused, and four committees focused on internal stakeholders and specific functional areas. Several functional units provided data to inform various areas of the focus, such that the committees had a basis for analysis, interpretation and decision making. In addition, a series of open forums were conducted to receive feedback from the community.

Data-informed Process. A data-informed process was key to the discussions and the approaches used to analyze inputs from stakeholders. Integrated SWOT analyses were conducted and integrated by the core group. Data forms included both quantitative and qualitative, with sources that included regular annual reporting related to compliance and accreditation. State-related reporting for units such as Business and Finance, Human Resources and internal assessments of programs for students, staff and faculty across the university were also included.

The care invested in informing the process properly supported the boldness of the vision, goals, strategies and outcome measures reflected in the plan.

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Alternative draft titles for this plan offered by the Core Team include:

- Preeminence 2030: The North Carolina A&T Blueprint for a Transformed Future
- Aggies Transform: Preeminence 2030
- Aggies Transformed: Beyond Preeminence
- P2030: The Audacity to Lead
- Audacious & Impactful: Plan 2030
- Aggies Transform the Human Condition
- Transforming the Human Condition: Strategic Plan 2030