

GSE Pillars of Distinction

During Fall 2013, GSE faculty, staff, students, and alumni representatives formed four task groups to meet the university-wide goals of Realizing UB 2020. These goals were: (1) world leadership in research and scholarship, (2) superior teaching and learning, (3) students proud of their experience, and (4) engaging partners to help and learn. GSE's task groups responded to each of these charges, forming four pillars upon which we will build our future together.

1. Evidence-based Educational Improvement Across the Lifespan

The Excellent Research and Innovation task group report reaffirms GSE's core mission to inform and prepare a profession to improve human development, education, and the information environment in local, national, and global contexts. With the changing national and international educational landscape, GSE must be positioned to address many pressing issues and challenges facing education today and in the future. Building on current existing strong foundations of excellent research and innovation within GSE while simultaneously investing in a few strategic thematic areas to foster interdisciplinary research and innovation, GSE will increase research initiatives to enhance its impact, distinction, and reputation in five areas: (1) Promoting Social and Educational Opportunity; (2) Information, Cognition, and the Science of Learning (ICSL); (3) Literacy Across the Lifespan; (4) Interventions for Wellness; and (5) Improving Education Through Big Data.

2. Pedagogy of Inquiry, Engagement, and Impact

The Superior Teaching and Learning task group reaffirmed the excellence of individual programs in GSE, while also offering a distinctive or "signature" set of curricular and pedagogical skills. The task group identified this signature initiative as a "*pedagogy of inquiry, engagement, and impact* given purpose by a commitment to *educational access and equity across the lifespan.*" By "access," we reinforce the notion that as education plays a larger and larger role in society, we need to think about how access to education can be maximized at all levels for all groups. By "equity," we reinforce a commitment to education as an engine for social mobility and human dignity. By "across the lifespan," we reinforce the idea that education does not take place only in discrete moments in time isolated from one another and is now an often lifetime proposition. Across the Graduate School of Education, programs are currently designed to emphasize experiential or grounded learning. Most importantly, impact is the demonstrated way we influence or change the communities with which we work as well as our own professional practice over time.

3. Lifelong Support for Students and Alumni

The Quality Student Service and Experience task group affirmed changes in the postsecondary educational landscape, noting that student services need to be seen as an increasingly central part of the graduate student experience. Support must be available and provided to students at all stages of the educational continuum, including the time of application and acceptance; entering as new students; as students move through their programs; and when students become alumni. The Graduate School of Education is working to become more student-centered in all aspects of our activities. Services offered to students during their graduate education experience help foster the development of competencies, skills, and lifelong practices for academic, as well as career excellence. At the graduate level, students access a variety of services through separate entities on campus. Therefore, GSE has created a service model characterized by integrated interdependence, whereby students are supported by all of the service units (within GSE and the overall campus community) in a holistic, cohesive manner.

4. Interprofessional Collaboration and Global Partnerships

The Engagement and Interprofessional Development task group affirmed that GSE has been a steady UB force for change and innovation in education and has served as an exemplar of community-based university research. GSE is dedicated to greater impact on the local civic context while maintaining our stature as a leading research institution. Based on a comprehensive review of current GSE faculty and programmatic strengths, ongoing research projects, and local service engagements, we believe that GSE can attain both. Collaborating with other UB units, GSE will continue to lead interprofessional efforts to engage local stakeholders. In light of current social, economic, and academic pressures, we help improve a better future for all students—particularly those in our region who are continually underserved by schools. Further, GSE will extend collaboration with international partners for global education impact.

Taken together, these four pillars will form the bedrock of GSE's multi-faceted approach to contemporary challenges in education. We look forward to working together, as a school, to meet these challenges.