



**AUGUSTA**  
UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN

# Progress Report

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**2024**

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CREATING A LEGACY

**LIKE NO  
OTHER.**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027









Dear Jaguar Nation,

As I reflect on my final year leading Augusta University, I often think of what *Creating a Legacy Like No Other* has come to mean as we have embarked on this bold new path over the last couple of years.

As the fastest growing public research university in Georgia, it means celebrating historic moments, such as surpassing the 10,000-student mark in 2023 with our largest-ever freshman class.

As we continue our upward trajectory in discovery, it means achieving a 9.3% increase in research and development expenditures over the past year and producing more stellar doctoral graduates in the years ahead.

And as one of the largest employers and community leaders in and around Augusta, it means planting seeds of inspiration among our students, faculty, staff and members of the community through partnerships such as the recently opened Junior Achievement Discovery Center.

It's also about the individual moments that serve as windows into the vibrant life of our university community:

- A freshman finding a sense of belonging thanks to a student club or Greek life
- A research team securing a major grant to pursue ground-breaking research
- A professor celebrating 40 years with the Medical College of Georgia
- An employee finding a sense of purpose through Days of Service

I am filled with immense pride for what we've accomplished since we launched our strategic plan in 2022, and I have a great sense of optimism for Augusta University's future.

In this report, you will find updates on our progress toward our three aspirational imperatives: 16,000 students by 2030, a Top 60 NIH ranking by 2030 with an implicit aspiration to achieve R1 Carnegie Classification and a Carnegie Community Engagement Classification by 2026. You also will find success stories of some of the individuals and teams among our university community who have helped lead the way.

I offer my gratitude to the countless students, faculty, staff, alumni, and corporate, community and government partners who have left their mark on Augusta University. It is thanks to every one of you that AU is truly Like No Other.

Go Jags!

Brooks A. Keel, PhD  
President, Augusta University

# ASPIRATIONAL IMPERATIVES DEFINED

Augusta University provides an experience like no other... a world-class academic and social community that is inclusive and diverse and positions students for opportunity and success. Our vision is to be a top-tier university that is a destination of choice for education, health care, discovery, creativity and innovation. We are proud to be a dynamic, comprehensive research university. We strive to implement our mission, vision and core values in every aspect of our university. We have three aspirational imperatives guiding our work as we move into the next phase of our strategic plan. Our progress toward achieving these imperatives will indicate the effectiveness of our strategic actions.

**16,000**  
STUDENTS BY  
**2030**



**CARNEGIE**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**ENGAGEMENT**  
**CLASSIFICATION**  
BY 2026

TOP **60** NIH R1  
RANKING BY 2030

Augusta University employed integrated methods of planning, resource alignment and assessment in support of the University System of Georgia's Strategic Plan. AU finalized *Creating a Legacy Like No Other* in spring 2022. This five-year plan emphasizes five strategic priorities: learning, discovery, student success, community and stewardship. It also focuses on three interwoven priorities: innovation, engagement and belonging.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

To provide clarity, transparency and accountability for AU's strategic alignment efforts, a governance structure was established to illustrate the roles and responsibilities at multiple levels.

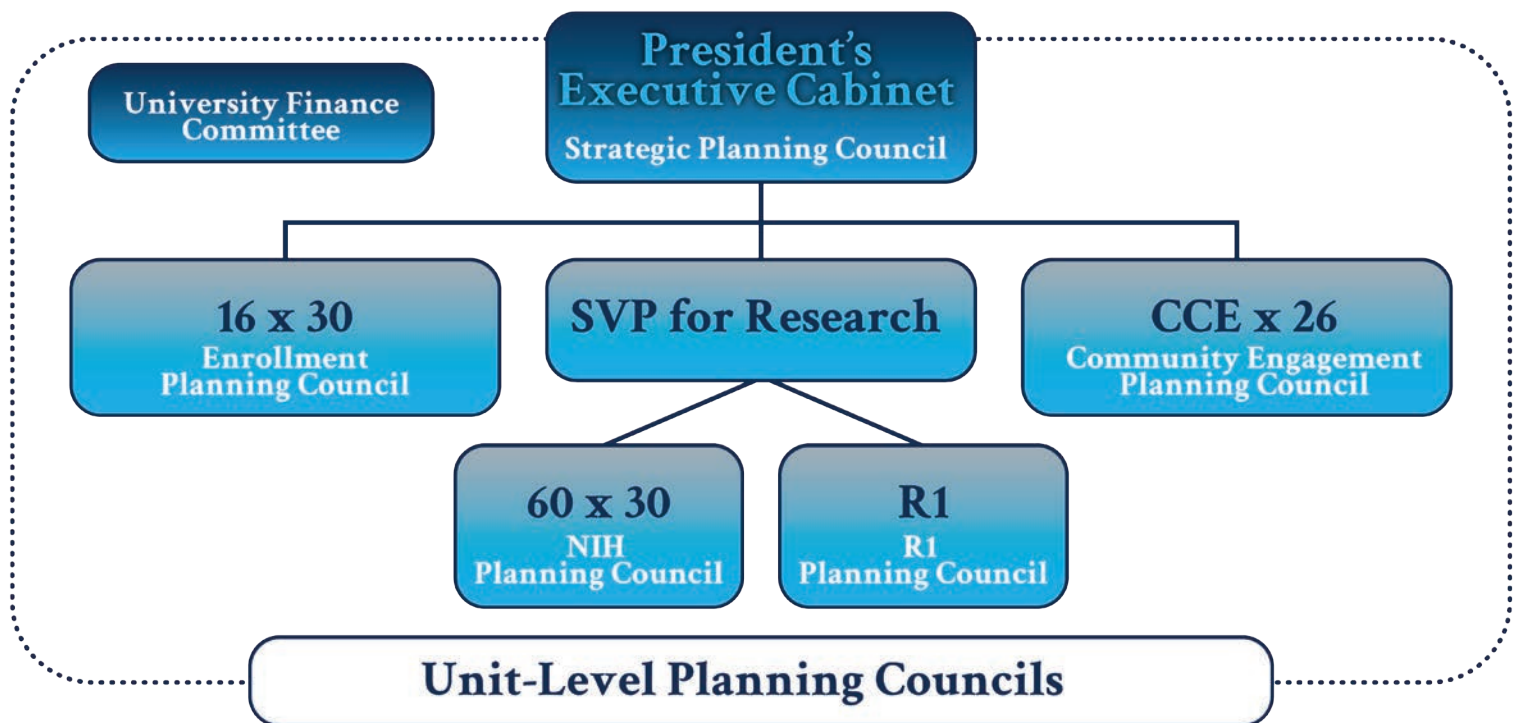
The President's Executive Cabinet serves as the Strategic Planning Council and oversees three primary areas:

- The Enrollment Planning Council, tasked with reaching an enrollment of 16,000 by 2030 (16x30)
- Senior Vice President for Research
- The Community Engagement Planning Council, tasked with achieving a Carnegie Community Engagement designation by 2026 (CCEx26)

The Senior Vice President for Research oversees:

- The NIH Planning Council, tasked with reaching a Top 60 NIH ranking by 2030 (60x30)
- The R1 Planning Council, tasked with reaching R1 status

The University Finance Committee is integral to all aspects of the Strategic Planning Governance.





**ASPIRATIONAL IMPERATIVE PROGRESS**

**16,000**  
STUDENTS BY  
**2030**

**7.5%**  
INCREASE IN  
Total Fall  
Enrollment  
2022 - 2023

**31.4%**  
INCREASE IN  
New Graduate Student  
Enrollment  
2022 - 2023

CELEBRATING  
**10,000+**  
STUDENTS!



Augusta University officially eclipsed the 10,000-student mark in fall 2023, as the university continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. The milestone brings AU one step closer to achieving its aspirational imperative of enrolling 16,000 students by 2030.

The College of Education and Human Development saw a 28% increase in enrollment in fall 2023.

*“Our College of Education and Human Development faculty and staff have been laser-focused on increasing enrollment since I became the dean.”*

-COEHD dean Judi Wilson, PhD



Augusta University Online launched in fall 2023, with 166 students enrolled in three graduate-level programs: the Master of Science in Information Security Management, Master of Education in Instruction and Master of Public Health.



The university launched three new degree offerings:

- Bachelor of Arts in Sports Management
- Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Systems Engineering
- Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience



Augusta University’s first graduate of the Digital and Visual Storytelling degree took center stage in December 2023.

*“Who gets to be one of one graduating in their major? I’m the first... I got to have such a personal experience with all the professors and really gained a lot from the small class sizes that are at AU.”*

- Grace Rolfe, the first student to graduate with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Digital and Visual Storytelling degree from Augusta University





## Highlights

BestColleges placed Augusta University in the Top 10 of universities with the best return on investment in 2023, ranking No. 5 in the country. The industry resource based its rankings on the average cost of attendance, federal aid and grants awarded to students, and future expected earnings.



OF TOP 10  
UNIVERSITIES  
IN 2023

### Giving at Augusta University Supports Enrollment Growth

The **Isaac, Andrew, Ethan and Caroline Cantrell Scholarship Endowment** (Hull College of Business)

The **Lillion P. & Victor Rattner Computer Science Scholarship Endowment** (School of Computer and Cyber Sciences)

The **Hanes Family Scholarship Endowment** (Dental College of Georgia)

The **Ever Onward Award Fund** in memory of College of Nursing Dean Emerita Lucy Marion, PhD

*"Having the Ever Onward Award Fund would allow students to look forward to this ceremony, instead of worrying about the financial obligations associated with it. I am thrilled to hear about this award fund, and I know it will make a huge impact on the new future nurses entering into this program."*

- Ashley Harper, 2024 BSN Class President

Nearly 1,500 AU employees donated a collective \$376,148 to the 2023 IGIVE campaign in support of scholarships, research, athletic training equipment and study abroad opportunities.



**On the Horizon in 2024:** With a goal of creating research opportunities that will attract students, Augusta University participated in the third annual Converge International Rural Health Symposium, held in partnership with the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy, University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University in Scotland. Augusta will expand upon its partnership with Scotland by sending a group of students from the Medical College of Georgia on a study abroad trip. The students will study rural health care with the goal of becoming better prepared to serve as physician advocates in Georgia and make informed suggestions for health policy.



ASPIRATIONAL IMPERATIVE PROGRESS

**TOP 60 NIH R1**  
RANKING BY **2030**

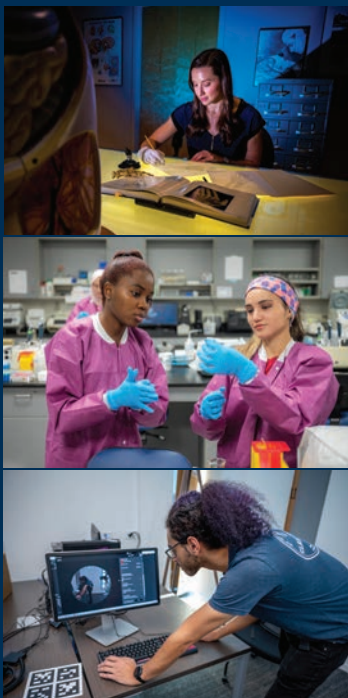
**16.6%**  
INCREASE IN  
MCG NIH FUNDING  
2022 - 2023

MCG NIH RANKING  
IMPROVED BY  
**6**  
POSITIONS  
2022 - 2023

**9.3%**  
INCREASE IN  
RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES  
2022 - 2023

*Creating a Legacy Like No Other's*  
second aspirational imperative  
is to earn a top-60 NIH ranking  
by 2030 and become an R1  
research university by 2031.

In the past year, AU has  
made significant progress in  
reaching its goal of increasing  
NIH funding, thanks in part  
to prestigious grants focused  
on women's health and sex  
differences, cancer suppressors,  
dental and craniofacial research  
and improving health outcomes  
in general.



Augusta University has secured a \$7.5 million grant through its designation as a Specialized Center of Research Excellence on Sex Differences by the NIH's Office of Research on Women's Health.

*"The project's Career Enhancement Core will provide pilot grants to three research projects each year for early-stage investigators."*

- Jennifer C. Sullivan, PhD, dean of The Graduate School and professor in the Medical College of Georgia



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY  
**MEDICAL COLLEGE OF GEORGIA**  
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

Muthusamy Thangaraju, PhD, an associate professor at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, was recently awarded an RO1 grant for **\$2,106,745** over five years to explore a cancer suppressor found in high-fiber diets.





## Highlighted Research Grants

Two research teams from Augusta University received three grants totaling almost \$5 million from the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) to continue projects addressing the opioid epidemic gripping rural areas of Georgia.

Augusta University is one of 44 teams nationwide to receive a \$1 million grant from the inaugural NSF Engines Development Awards in the National Science Foundation's Regional Innovation Engines program. The project, spearheaded by the School of Computer and Cyber Sciences, aims to bridge the cybersecurity skills gap while simultaneously elevating the socio-economic status of Augusta's River Region.



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY

**SCHOOL OF COMPUTER  
AND CYBER SCIENCES**



The College of Science and Mathematics' new interdisciplinary labs are now open to researchers across the campus, and offer space for scientists, graduate and undergraduate students to collaborate and produce groundbreaking research.



### Discovery Like No Other

Guido Verbeck, PhD, chair of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry in the College of Science and Mathematics, was named to the 2023 Class of Fellows for the National Academy of Inventors (NAI).

Verbeck's inventions include portable mass spectrometry and chemical sensors which can be used outside the lab to detect harmful chemicals.

Verbeck has also received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to create devices for detecting other diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis, that can be installed outdoors in any environment.



**ASPIRATIONAL IMPERATIVE PROGRESS**



**Fall 2023 Student Service Hours:**

**12,130**

With the help of JagPulse, a community engagement platform launched in 2023, students, faculty and staff at AU are connecting to nonprofits across Augusta’s River Region. The new online platform allows AU to collect data and report on the engagement taking place in the community each year. The implementation of JagPulse supports the university’s aspirational imperative of achieving the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement by 2026.

## Partnerships in the Spotlight

AU has entered into a partnership with Wellstar Health System to establish Wellstar MCG Health. The new partnership will enable more educational growth and community service opportunities as the Medical College of Georgia looks to establish a new regional clinical campus in Atlanta at Wellstar Kennestone.

The Medical College of Georgia cemented plans for a new four-year campus in Savannah in partnership with Georgia Southern University. The campus is expected to open in fall 2024 and will provide opportunities to expand community health initiatives in the area.

Peach State Health Plan and the Centene Foundation announced a \$2.2 million funding commitment to Augusta University. The funding will facilitate the expansion of AU’s MCG 3+ Primary Care Pathway Program targeting underserved rural areas and support the launch of a new loan forgiveness program for new physicians establishing practices in those areas.

Augusta University and Savannah River National Laboratory formalized their long-standing partnership and expanded upon their shared mission to address global security issues.

Located in the Hub for Community Innovation in the heart of Augusta’s Harrisburg neighborhood, the Dr. Paulette P. Harris Literacy Center focuses on increasing literacy skills in adults and children across the community, while providing unique experiential learning opportunities for AU students.





## Highlights

### A Future Like No Other

*'We see all of these middle schoolers as future Jaguars'*

Approximately 15,000 local middle school students each year will learn valuable life skills, such as financial literacy and career readiness, in an entertaining and interactive environment in the 30,000-square-foot Junior Achievement Discovery Center, which opened in Evans in January 2024.

Augusta University teamed up as a community partner with Junior Achievement of Georgia and the school districts in Richmond and Columbia counties with the goal to help teach future generations ways they can succeed in a global economy.



Augusta University Athletics ranked 8th nationally in the NCAA's DII Helper Helper Service Challenge in recognition of student-athletes' volunteer efforts across Augusta's River Region.



Laura Williamson, PhD, director of the Center for Bioethics and Health Policy, developed a new mentorship program with Lucy Craft Laney High School. With the help of student mentors from organizations such as the Black Student Nurses Society, high schoolers can learn about potential collegiate and career paths.







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To view the full plan, visit



[augusta.edu/strategic-plan](https://augusta.edu/strategic-plan)