



I N S P I R E

MERCER'S VISION FOR THE DECADE AHEAD

MERCER
UNIVERSITY



THE MISSION OF MERCER UNIVERSITY IS TO EQUIP ITS STUDENTS
WITH THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED TO LIVE
FULL AND SUCCESSFUL LIVES, TO EMPOWER THEM TO BECOME LEADERS
IN COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, AND TO INSPIRE
THEM TO DEPLOY THEIR TALENTS TO POSITIVELY IMPACT
THE HUMAN CONDITION. OUR VISION IS TO CHANGE THE WORLD
ONE STUDENT AT A TIME.



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ERCER TODAY STANDS AMONG THE LEADING PRIVATE RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES IN THE NATION AND ENJOYS UNPRECEDENTED INSTITUTIONAL MOMENTUM. OVER THE LAST DECADE, MERCER HAS BEEN FORMALLY RECLASSIFIED AS A DOCTORAL-RESEARCH UNIVERSITY. FOLLOWING THIS RECLASSIFICATION, *U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT* HAS RANKED MERCER AMONG THE FIRST TIER OF NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES. WITH OUR ELECTION INTO PHI BETA KAPPA, MERCER BECAME ONE OF ONLY

THREE PHI BETA KAPPA RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES IN GEORGIA.

This standing among our nation's finest universities has been achieved without sacrificing the qualities that have made Mercer special — without losing our institutional soul. We have preserved a personal and intimate educational experience in which class sizes for undergraduate students remain among the smallest in the country. No undergraduate classes are taught by teaching assistants or graduate students and the percentage of students engaged in research with faculty is higher than at our peer institutions.

We have preserved the diverse environment that helps define Mercer, a quality that has been carefully nurtured at Mercer since the 1960s. Mercer's heritage as an institution founded by people in the free-church tradition continues to undergird our university through our strong commitment to intellectual freedom and through compelling programs that inspire students to lead lives of service to others.

As we look to the next decade, we envision a world-class research university effectively preparing students for futures in an interdependent global community. We envision a diverse community of scholars that attracts among the most talented students, faculty, and staff who are joined together in their commitment to make a positive difference in the world — who marshal the intellectual capital of the University and the tools of our laboratories and libraries to solve pressing problems affecting humankind. We envision a university committed to evolving as necessary to meet the needs of our time where the pace of change continues to accelerate. We envision a vibrant and exciting academic community of innovators, fearless and eager to compete against the best in every worthwhile endeavor. We envision a place authentically committed to interpreting its founding heritage in a way that meets the needs of humankind.

As we pursue this vision, we will focus on seven strategic imperatives:

1 BEING AN INTIMATE AND DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF GIFTED SCHOLARS COMMITTED TO CHANGING THE WORLD

Great universities attract diverse and talented students, faculty, and staff. Our best selling points are who we are and what we do. We believe in ourselves. Mercer is committed to recruiting outstanding community members by focusing on our distinctive mission and attributes. We will continue to enhance our efforts to tell the Mercer story and experience measured growth in enrollment, while also increasing our student profile and our already strong commitment to diversity.



1

Imperative 1:

BEING AN INTIMATE AND DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF GIFTED SCHOLARS COMMITTED TO CHANGING THE WORLD

Enhance marketing to prospective students, faculty, and staff to attract those who share the Mercer vision.

Explore ways to more directly engage staff in activities that are changing the lives of our students and faculty.

Increase traditional undergraduate enrollment from 3,253 to 3,750 students.

Increase the academic profile of traditional undergraduates to an average ACT score of 30 and an average grade point average of 3.95.

As a means of preserving Mercer's diversity, limit undergraduate tuition increases to no more than increases in the consumer price index. Similar constraint will be exercised in tuition increases for graduate and professional programs.

Attract committed community members.

At Mercer everyone majors in changing the world. More than a slogan, this statement reflects our aspiration for each member of our academic community. To ensure that it reflects our reality, the University will seek to identify and attract undergraduate, graduate, and professional students as well as faculty and staff who share this vision for their lives. This will require a more robust, individualized and integrated assessment of each applicant's potential to be successful in a challenging and rigorous academic community, while being immersed in the campus culture and committed to stewarding the mission.

To this end, we will enhance marketing to prospective students, faculty, and staff to include stories and outcomes that affirm Mercer's mission while highlighting research, service, and leadership opportunities throughout our institution. There is no more powerful statement of institutional priorities than the stories we choose to tell about the accomplishments of students, faculty, and staff members. We will also explore ways to more directly engage our staff in activities that are changing the lives of our students and faculty.

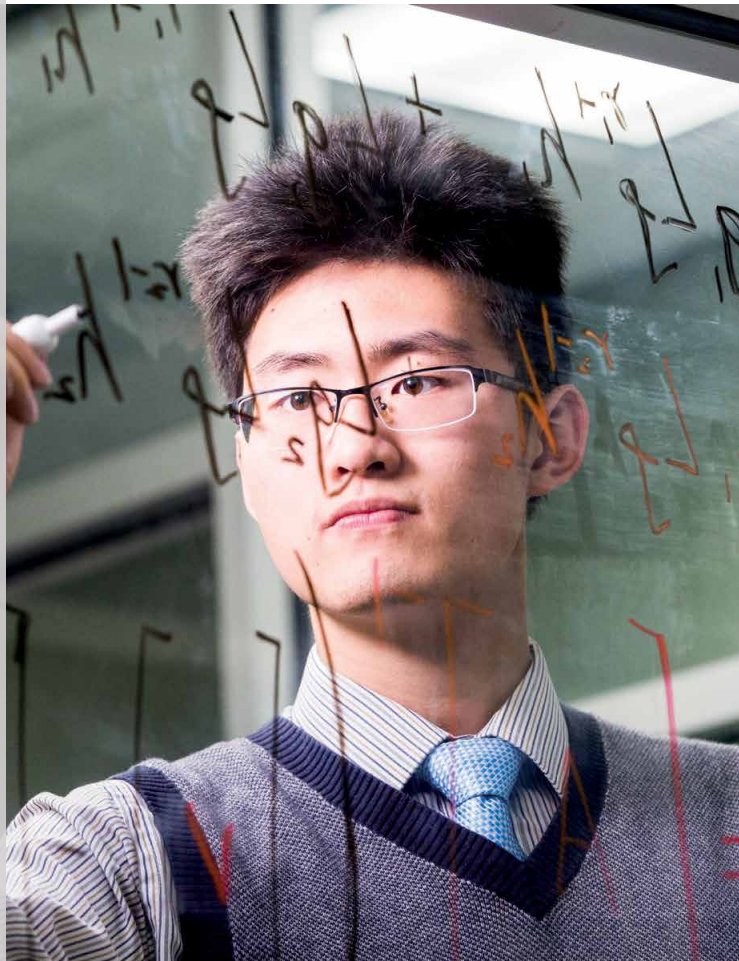
Achieve measured enrollment growth for traditional undergraduates. The University's traditional undergraduate student enrollment has seen significant growth over the last several years. From 2011 to 2017, Macon traditional undergraduate student enrollment has increased by 41 percent, from 2,306 in 2011 to 3,253 in 2017. Freshman enrollment has grown from 565 in 2011 to 891 in 2017, an increase of 58 percent. Mercer will continue to increase traditional undergraduate enrollment from 3,253 to 3,750 students because we believe in the educational experience here, and we believe the world needs more Mercerians. While we want our programs to be accessible to as many students as possible, we must balance this objective against our commitment

to an intimate learning environment, which ensures that each student is valued as an individual.

Increase academic profile.

While experiencing a 41 percent growth in undergraduate student population in Macon, Mercer has also experienced a significant increase in academic profile over the past five years. The incoming class of 2012 had an ACT average of 26 and grade point average of 3.67. The incoming class of 2017 had an ACT average of 28 and grade point average of 3.90. Over the next decade, we anticipate that the academic profile of Mercer's traditional undergraduate students will increase to an average ACT score of 30 and an average grade point average of 3.95.

Serve post-traditional undergraduates. Like many leading universities, Mercer has a proud tradition of serving the educational needs of post-traditional undergraduate students, which constitute a growing population of degree seekers. Our undergraduate student population currently includes 3,253 traditional undergraduate students in Macon, 350 undergraduate nursing





2

Imperative 2:

BEING A PLACE OF DISCOVERY AND INNOVATION

•
Surpass \$60 million in annual National Science Foundation-defined research expenditures.

•
Support research in areas of promise through internal seed grant funding, continued development of core facilities, and development of effective faculty research mentoring programs.

•
Explore cooperative relationships with other research universities that will enable Mercer scientists to access equipment at those institutions on the same terms as scientists at those institutions.

•
Determine appropriate staffing expertise, organization, and tools of the Grants and Contracts Office and the Office of Research Compliance to support the University's research agenda.

•
Complete a new Health Sciences Center on the Atlanta Campus, enabling expansion and renovation of existing research space in the College of Pharmacy.

•
Continue enhancing the quality of existing Ph.D. programs, evaluate and prioritize the launch of new graduate programs based on industry and institutional needs as well as market demand, and charge the University Graduate Council to develop a comprehensive vision for graduate education within the University.

•
Meet the criteria for further Carnegie reclassification as a Doctoral/Research University — Higher Research Activity (R2).

students in Atlanta, and 1,057 post-traditional undergraduate students completing degrees in Mercer's regional academic centers. The University offers a broad array of programs especially suited to meet the needs of these post-traditional undergraduate students, including programs in information technology, human services, accounting, management and marketing, and early, middle, and special education. Each of these fields is projected to offer opportunity for college graduates for the foreseeable future. Over the next decade, as we increase the traditional undergraduate population in Macon to 3,750 students, we expect to increase the post-traditional undergraduate student population in our regional academic centers to 2,000 students.

Remain affordable. A diverse student population enhances the educational experience of all students as they engage people from different backgrounds and life experiences. Mercer exposes its students to a richer diversity of colleagues than any of its peer or aspirational peer institutions. A significant element of Mercer's success in achieving diversity has been positioning the University as the premier private lower-cost alternative. Mercer will continue to avoid real increases in the cost of attendance by disciplining ourselves to limit undergraduate tuition increases to no more than increases in the consumer price index. We will exercise similar restraint in pricing our graduate and professional programs.

Optimize professional schools. Mercer has a long tradition of positively impacting society through the preparation of professionals in law, health professions, theology, and education. Many of our most accomplished graduates have been

educated in our professional schools. We will endeavor to ensure that enrollment in these schools reflects societal needs and market conditions, requiring that some of our professional schools expand over the next decade, others will remain stable, while others will find increased strength in smaller numbers. Our professional school graduates must be equipped with the knowledge and skills required to pass required licensing examinations, to obtain meaningful employment in their chosen professions, and provide quality professional service to future patients, clients, and students. The size of our professional school programs will be driven by an ongoing assessment of where we stand on these metrics.

2

BEING A PLACE OF DISCOVERY AND INNOVATION

Over the next decade, Mercer will enhance its reputation among leading private research universities by focusing our resources where we can have the greatest impact. Research and creative activity are central to the work of this University. Over the past decade, we have moved into the top tier of national research universities. As we embark on our next decade, we must focus our resources to obtain maximum benefit for students while enabling Mercer to make the greatest contribution possible to the common good.

Continue to build on its existing strength in undergraduate research. Mercer has established one of the finest undergraduate research programs in the United States. The National Survey of Student Engagement confirms that a higher percentage of Mercer undergraduate students participate in faculty-directed research than at any of our institutional comparison groups. Hundreds of undergraduate students annually present their research at regional and national meetings, engage in faculty-directed research, and make research presentations at campus celebrations of undergraduate research. We have become a leading producer of Goldwater Scholars — the most prestigious national research scholarship available to undergraduate students in the STEM disciplines.

The value of engagement in rigorous faculty-directed undergraduate research is evident in admissions to prestigious graduate and professional schools, in successful competition for post-graduate fellowships and scholarships such as Fulbright Awards, and in fueling a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship



among Mercer undergraduates and recent graduates. That culture is supported by the Mercer Innovation Center, which encourages students and faculty to take ideas developed through their research and build those ideas into successful enterprises.

Over the next decade, we will continue to build on our existing strength in undergraduate research as we aspire to a program that consistently ranks among the top institutions in the nation in levels of participation and quality of achievement. Integrating

the research and service missions of the University through our *Research That Reaches Out* initiative will be a special area of emphasis because of the powerful impact this integration has on student learning experiences.

Continue to support a wide range of faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity, but especially focus resources in areas of demonstrated excellence and potential.

Active research agendas keep faculty members current to the





benefit of their students. Moreover, contributing to the expansion of knowledge and understanding is among the obligations of great universities as we contribute toward making a better world. Mercer supports a wide range of faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity in the sciences, humanities, social sciences, and music, and will continue to do so.

Necessarily, however, we will allocate scarce resources (time, equipment, library resources, facilities, etc.) in areas where faculty have demonstrated high levels of achievement and potential through meaningful external validation of the quality and relevance of their research and scholarship. As one example, the Southern Studies program in the College of Liberal Arts exemplifies high faculty achievement in research and scholarship. Faculty are publishing books with leading academic publishing houses that are making important and original contributions to human knowledge and understanding. They secured external funding in the form of a \$500,000 NEH grant and helped raise the required \$1.5 million match to support their program. As a consequence of faculty efforts, the Spencer B. King, Jr. Center for Southern Studies is widely recognized as the finest undergraduate program in the field.

The Center for Drug Delivery Research is another example. This Center currently includes 14 research scientists from the College of Pharmacy and School of Medicine, a number of post-doctoral students, and more than 40 Ph.D. students. Over the past several years, the Center has developed an intellectual property portfolio that includes eight patents. Scientists in the Center have secured extramural funding from a wide range of sources evidencing the quality and relevance of their research. These sources include federal and state agencies as well as private industry. Two start-up companies have emerged seeking to commercialize the intellectual property developed by the Center, while elements of that portfolio have been licensed to a firm seeking to develop a vaccine for ovarian cancer.

Other examples of demonstrated excellence and potential include (a) aviation systems research at the Mercer Engineering Research Center; (b) research focused on the discovery of new therapeutic and diagnostic biomarkers, which includes promising work seeking to discover a biomarker for pancreatic cancer; (c) research focused on the development of biomedical devices, including the prosthetics that have now been provided to thousands of Vietnamese amputees; (d) research that has developed systems for tracking mercury contamination in South American gold mining communities and preventing that contamination from entering the atmosphere; (e) research focused on Christian ethics through the Center for Theology and Public Life, which provides a leading moral voice in American Christianity; and (f) research in the Center for Rural Health Disparities that promises to ensure

the standing of the School of Medicine as the leading center for the study of rural health challenges and solutions. Researchers in each of these areas have successfully attracted external funding from federal, state, foundation, philanthropic, and private industry sources to support their research.

Increase administrative, financial, equipment, and facilities support for research in areas of demonstrated excellence and promise. As faculty increasingly engage in relevant high-quality research, the amount of external and internal support for that research will increase as well. Over the past decade,

The University will support research in areas of promise through internal seed grant funding, continued development of core facilities, and development of effective faculty research mentoring programs. The University will inventory available research equipment to facilitate faculty access to that equipment. Further, the University will explore cooperative relationships with other research universities that will enable Mercer scientists to access equipment at those institutions on the same terms as scientists at those institutions.

The University will also improve administrative infrastructure

to support its research mission. The University will determine appropriate staffing expertise and organization of the Grants and Contracts Office and the Office of Research Compliance. Mercer will also invest in appropriate technology to facilitate the grant submission process as well as invest in grant writing support. The University will continue investing in research facilities. Over the past decade, the University has expanded the Hoskins Medical Education and Research Center in Savannah, acquired and repurposed what is now the Clinical Research facility in the College of Pharmacy, and recently completed the Godsey Science Center in Macon. The University will complete a new Health Sciences Center in Atlanta, which will enable us to expand and renovate existing research space in the College of Pharmacy.

Continue to enhance the quality of existing Ph.D. programs while prioritizing the launch of new graduate programs to meet student,

institutional, and industry demands. Over the past decade, the University has dramatically expanded its footprint in Ph.D. programs offered and students served by these programs. In 2007-08, the number of Ph.D. degrees awarded at Mercer was seven, with all graduates coming from our only research doctoral program at the time, which was in pharmaceutical sciences. A decade later in 2016-17, the University awarded 59 Ph.D. degrees to students in pharmaceutical sciences, nursing, counseling, and education. This increase has resulted in the University's reclassification by the Carnegie Foundation as a Doctoral/Research University —



the University's National Science Foundation-defined research expenditures have doubled from \$18 million to approximately \$36 million. Most of that increase has come from increased extramural support. Provided that federal sources continue to increase support for research activity, and with additional commitments to research from internal resources, it is reasonable to aspire to surpassing \$60 million in annual NSF research expenditures over the next decade.

This can be accomplished as researchers expand their research portfolios by increasing the amount and variety of funding sources.

3

Imperative 3:

BEING A GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

- Appoint a council to consider ways that Mercer's curriculum can better meet the needs of 21st century global citizens.

- Increase percentage of international students from 3.3 percent to 7 percent.

- Develop a wider array of relationships with institutions of higher learning throughout the world.

- Continue developing new and additional study abroad opportunities for students.

- Engage more than 400 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students annually in Mercer On Mission.

Moderate Research Activity (R3).

Committed to our classification as a research university, Mercer will work to continue enhancing the quality of existing Ph.D. programs, will evaluate and prioritize the launch of new graduate programs based on industry and institutional needs as well as market demand, and will charge the University Graduate Council to develop a comprehensive vision for graduate education within the University. Within the next decade, the University will meet the criteria for further Carnegie reclassification as a Doctoral/Research University — Higher Research Activity (R2) as we continue developing Ph.D. programs appropriate for our mission.

3 BEING A GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

Among our most pressing obligations as an institution of higher learning is preparing our students for success in a world that is not only interconnected, but has become interdependent. Succeeding in the 21st century will require the ability to connect to a global flow of ideas, networks, innovators, and entrepreneurs. We must equip our students with the knowledge and skills to adapt to this changing global climate.

Integrate global perspectives throughout our curriculum. While we have begun developing degree programs designed to prepare students for careers in global health and international development, preparing our students for success in an interdependent world will require us to look beyond specific degree programs to integrate global perspectives throughout our undergraduate, graduate, and professional curriculum. The Provost will appoint a council to meet regularly and consider ways

that our curriculum can better meet the needs of 21st century global citizens.

Further internationalize our campuses. Being a place where students from around the world come together to live, study, conduct research, and recreate enables students to develop a deeper understanding of others. Mercer intends to prioritize international student recruitment, with a goal of increasing the population of international students on our Macon and Atlanta campuses. While this runs contrary to the recent trend toward a decline in presence of international students on campuses in the United States, we



think that with focused effort and appropriate strategic partners, we can more than double the percentage of international students at Mercer from the present level of 3.3 percent of our student population to at least seven percent within the next decade. This is a realistic goal, given that Mercer offers high-quality programs that especially are attractive to international students (business, engineering, health sciences), and we have a campus in Atlanta, a major hub of international economic activity.



COLLEGE OF PHARMACY

4

Imperative 4: BEING RELEVANT

Develop and promote curricular innovations that explore issues of cyber-security and information management, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and end-user education.

Integrate understanding of systemic changes in human behaviors and practices related to rapid innovation and the emergence of new communications platforms.

Align curriculum and pedagogy to utilize appropriate technology for academic and professional development.

Adapt professional curriculum to reflect emerging changes in virtual service delivery and information processing.

Enhance evaluation processes across the University to ensure appropriate metrics are used to assess the ongoing viability and relevance of all programs.

Increase the post-traditional undergraduate student population in Regional Academic Centers from 1,000 to 2,000 students.

Revise and integrate an individualized, student-centered admissions process that will enhance the post-traditional student experience throughout the recruitment process.

Redesign the University's website from the ground up to more effectively market Mercer's diverse academic offerings, clearly demonstrate positive learning outcomes, and communicate its distinctive mission.

Deliver individualized student support services.

Explore establishment of an expanded campus of the School of Medicine in Columbus.

Increase M.D. enrollment from 462 to 720 students.

Seek funding to endow a Center for Gerontology.

Mercer will also develop a wider array of relationships with institutions of higher learning throughout the world. These relationships will facilitate faculty exchanges, exposing our students to leading scholars from other nations, and shared classrooms through the use of technology so that students from Mercer can study with students enrolled in partner institutions.

Expand international research, service learning and study abroad. There is no substitute for international travel to enable our students to experience different people and cultures. Traditional semester and summer abroad experiences are an important vehicle for accomplishing this result. Over the next decade, we will continue developing new and additional study abroad opportunities for students.

The most impactful engaged learning experience for Mercer students fully integrates study abroad, research, and service learning. Some examples include Mercer On Mission's clean water programs in Africa and Latin America, its prosthetics program in Vietnam, and mercury containment endeavors in South America. Mercer On Mission transforms the lives of our students by inspiring them to

address the needs of humankind as global problem solvers and innovators. More than 250 students currently participate in these experiences. Over the next decade, we intend to engage more than 400 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students annually in Mercer On Mission programs around the globe.

Enhance international post-graduate opportunities.

Mercer is already a leading source of graduates seeking to work in international development, through governmental and non-governmental organizations. Over the past year, eight students have received appointments to the Peace Corps, which has now selected the University as a Peace Corps Prep center. A number of other students spend a year abroad following graduation in programs such as ServiceFirst, which places our graduates into international teaching opportunities. Mercer students are increasingly competitive in pursuing Fulbright Awards for post-graduate teaching and research in other nations.

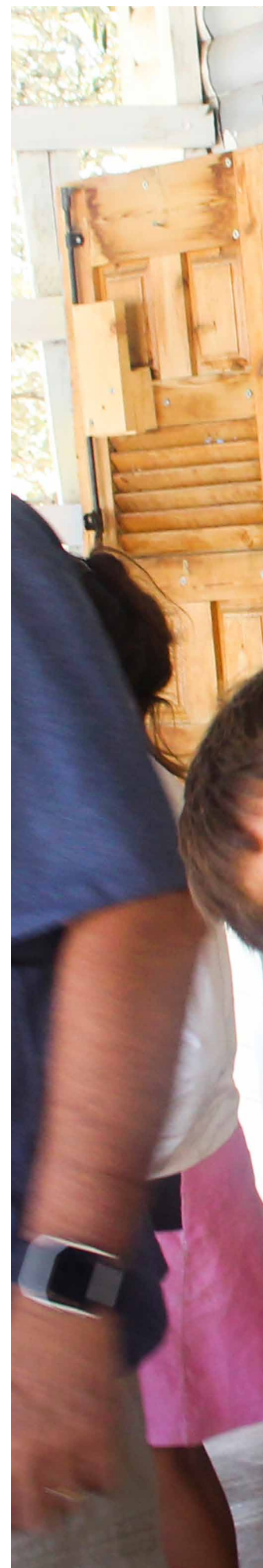
MERCER ON MISSION
Crossing cultures. Changing lives.

4

BEING RELEVANT

Great books never change. Neither does the need for well-educated individuals with the capacity to think clearly and critically and to communicate persuasively. Likewise, well-educated men and women must acquire some breadth of intellectual exposure to discoveries made in an array of disciplines, as well as be enriched through exposure to literature, art, and music. They must be grounded in ethical reasoning and prepared for the responsibilities of citizenship in a free society. These higher education imperatives are immutable.

Other academic disciplines such as computer science are rapidly evolving. Innovations in technology are revolutionizing

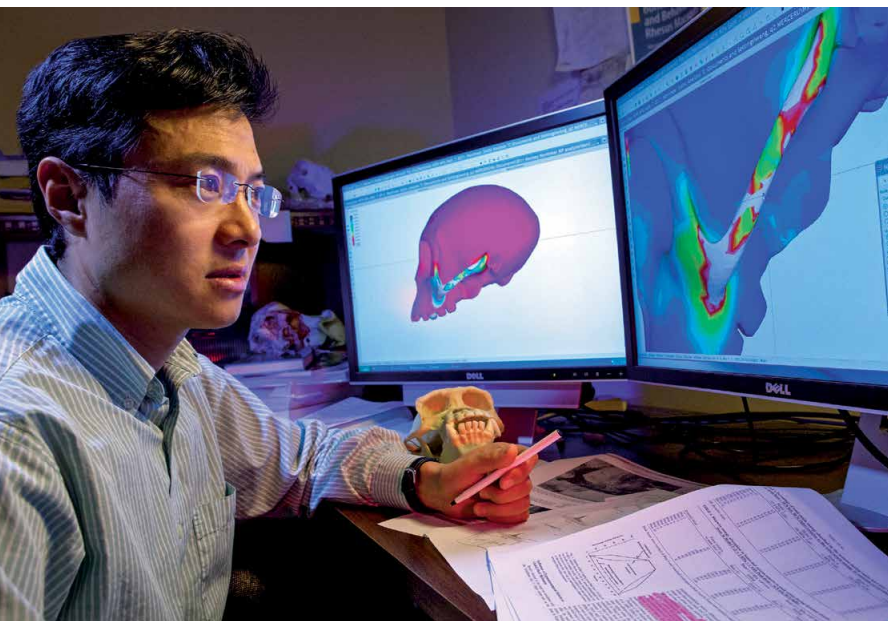




the structures and timescales of individual/organizational interactions, communications, and transactions. These ongoing innovations have expanded opportunities and present new challenges ranging from technological development, information security, service delivery, and social practices. Confronting these issues requires professionals who are not only well suited to the traditional demands of their field, but who also possess the awareness and adaptability to deal with rapidly changing modes of delivery and practice.

Prepare students for a world of disruptive innovation. In educating the professional class of tomorrow, Mercer must be at the forefront of training students in the development of, access to, and responsiveness to disruptive innovations. To this end, Mercer will:

- Develop and promote curricular innovations that explore issues of cyber-security and information



management, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and end-user education.

- Integrate understanding of systemic changes in human behaviors and practices related to rapid innovation and the emergence of new communication platforms.
- Align curriculum and pedagogy to utilize appropriate technology for academic and professional development.
- Adapt professional curriculum to reflect emerging changes in virtual service delivery and information processing.

Among Mercer's greatest institutional strengths is its capacity to move quickly. It is important to remind ourselves that because the pace of evolution in science and technology will only accelerate and societal needs will continue to change, we must continually survey the environment and move quickly when necessary to address new opportunities and needs. Evaluation processes across the University will be enhanced to ensure appropriate metrics are

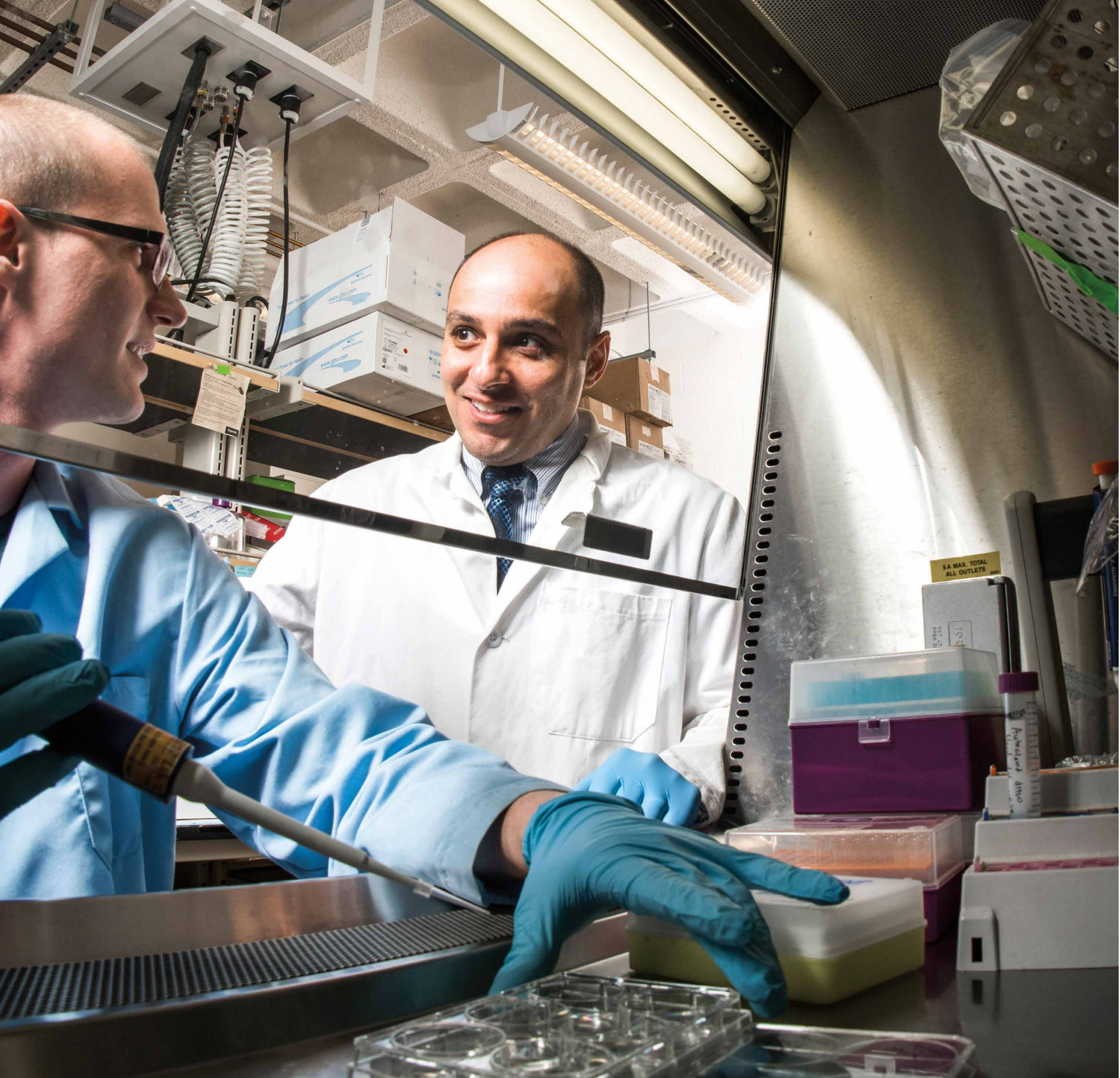
used to assess the ongoing viability and relevance of all programs.

Increase opportunities for post-traditional students.

These same dynamics impact individuals as well as institutions. More than ever before, individuals must be life-long learners who will sometimes need to update their formal education through degree and certificate programs. More than half of all college students are post-traditional students — adult learners seeking to complete undergraduate degrees, seeking to retool and re-credential, or requiring graduate degrees. Their needs include high-quality micro-credentials in emerging fields, online offerings to address the need for flexibility, and prior learning assessments.

As an important component of meeting the educational needs of society and of maximizing our impact and relevance, the University is committed to attracting, retaining, and graduating post-traditional students, and constantly reevaluating and updating our curriculum and modes of delivery. The post-traditional population is composed of students who identify as being part-time or full-time, adult learners, returning veterans, distance learners, students who are working full-time, and students who have responsibilities beyond classes. These students bring new and different expectations and desire a personalized experience from all stakeholders, including the enrollment management team, professional staff, deans, and faculty. To meet their needs, we must revise and integrate an individualized, student-centered admissions





process that will enhance the student experience throughout the recruitment process. We must leverage the brand of Mercer University — a 185-year-old institution widely recognized among the finest private research universities for providing high-quality and empowering educational experiences. We must redesign the University's website from the ground up to more effectively market Mercer's diverse academic offerings, clearly demonstrate outcomes, and communicate its distinctive mission. We must

deliver student support services to ensure that these students can achieve their goals and make a positive impact on the world.

Meet health care needs. Mercer's Academic Health Sciences Center encompasses our College of Pharmacy, School of Medicine, College of Nursing, and College of Health Professions (Physician Assistant, Physical Therapy, Public Health, and Clinical Medical Psychology). This has been one of the fastest-growing areas within the University, with overall enrollment increasing 25 percent over

the past five years (from 1,736 in 2012 to 2,175 in 2017). This total does not include undergraduate pre-health sciences students, biomedical engineering students, athletic training students, or students in a variety of other programs related to population health care and management. The intensive focus on health care is certainly appropriate, given that health care spending continues to grow at a pace far exceeding the rate of inflation and now constitutes 17.9 percent of the gross national product (GNP) in the United States. Growth is expected to continue as our population ages, with the portion of GNP consumed by health care spending projected to reach 20 percent by 2025.

Because of the breadth and quality of our programs in the

health sciences, Mercer is well positioned to be a national leader in exploring new and innovative models for more efficient and effective delivery of health care, including the use of emerging technologies to extend the reach and impact of health care providers and improve patient access to health care, as well as the evolution of new professions to improve health care outcomes. At the same time, Mercer expects to continue increasing the number of physicians, nurses, physician assistants, physical therapists, and public health professionals educated within our Academic Health Sciences Center. We will continue exploring creation of an expanded campus of the School of Medicine in Columbus, which



would enable us eventually to increase enrollment in our M.D. program from 462 to 720 students, as well as creating an endowed Center for Gerontology.

5 ACHIEVING MEANINGFUL OUTCOMES

Students invest large amounts of time and financial resources to obtain an undergraduate and post-graduate education. Outcomes matter in deciding where to invest. At our finest institutions of higher learning — including ones like Mercer that embrace the residential college model of undergraduate education — many of the most important learning outcomes elude objective metrics. Developing critical thinking skills, the ability to engage in ethical reasoning, and the capacity to relate to people from differing backgrounds are surely important learning outcomes, but despite various efforts through survey instruments, reliable tools to measure student achievement in developing these skills and attributes are elusive.

Other important outcomes, however, can be quantified. Retention rates, placement into prestigious post-graduate fellowships, graduate school placement, employment outcomes, and success rates on licensing examinations can all be measured. To meet the needs and demands of our students, we must focus more on these outcomes than ever before.

Increase Retention Rates. To ensure that we only admit students who have a strong likelihood of remaining enrolled through graduation, Mercer will continue to develop effective, holistic, and reliable ways to measure each prospective student's capacity for success at Mercer. Once a student has enrolled, we will continue to implement programming and processes to help that student continue on through graduation. The University's freshman-to-sophomore retention rate has increased from 80 percent in 2013 to more than 87 percent in 2016. Over the next ten years, freshman-to-sophomore retention rates will increase from 87 to 92 percent. Freshman-to-graduate retention rates will also increase from 65 to 75 percent.

Student success is at least as important among post-traditional undergraduate students as it is among traditional undergraduate students. Given this reality, we intend to meet or exceed our goal of a 75 percent graduation rate for traditional undergraduate students among our population of post-traditional students as well.

Foster further collaboration regarding engaged learning/high-impact practices. Mercer excels at providing engaged learning experiences for students that drive desirable outcomes, including post-graduate opportunities. We can do even better by improving collaboration and communication regarding these experiences within the institution, through structures such as the *Research That Reaches Out* initiative. To further this effort, Mercer will create an Engaged Learning Council under the Office of the Provost to facilitate institution-wide communication, coordination, and alignment of such opportunities. This council will develop curricular pathways that incorporate engaged learning experiences throughout students' academic careers. Given the importance of engaged learning and high impact practices to preparing

Imperative 5:

ACHIEVING MEANINGFUL OUTCOMES

•
Increase freshman-to-sophomore retention rate from 87 percent to 92 percent.

•
Increase freshman-to-graduate retention rate from 65 percent to 75 percent.

•
Create an Engaged Learning Council to facilitate institution-wide communication, coordination and alignment of engaged learning and high-impact practices.

•
Place more than 20 graduating seniors each year into prestigious post-graduate fellowships and appointments.

•
Appoint a dedicated Fellowship Coordinator.

•
Appoint a Professional School Council to assist in advising students on post-graduate study opportunities.

•
Appoint a dedicated staff member to assist with graduate school advising and coordination of fellowships.

•
Ensure that faculty are appropriately recognized for success in advising and placement in graduate and professional programs.

•
Ensure that more than 90 percent of undergraduate students have an internship/field experience prior to graduation.

•
Add a dedicated staff member for internship development and employer relations.

•
Add a dedicated staff member to provide career counseling to post-traditional and distance learning students.

•
Work closely with faculty to develop additional internships for academic credit.

•
Increase career development programming for all students, including preparation for entrepreneurship and more targeted and specialized career events on campus.

•
Continue to support entrepreneurship and innovation.

•
Mercer's professional schools and colleges will establish applicable targets for licensure exam passage rates.



students for success after graduation, Mercer will ensure that all graduating seniors in our traditional undergraduate program have participated in at least one engaged learning experience, such as individual faculty-directed research, study abroad, service-learning, or internships. We expect that the vast majority will have engaged in multiple engaged learning experiences.

Increase prestigious fellowships and appointments.

An outstanding undergraduate learning environment leads to exceptional post-graduate opportunities for the products of that environment. We continue creating opportunities for prestigious and meaningful post-graduate opportunities for our students, including Mercer's selection to become one of only 112 institutions eligible to nominate students for prestigious Churchill Scholarships for post-graduate study at the University of Cambridge, and Mercer's selection as a Peace Corps Prep site. We have made tremendous progress over the past decade in the number of students at Mercer who receive prestigious post-graduate appointments, such as Fulbright Award, Peace Corps and Teach For America appointments, and Woodrow Wilson Fellowships. We will continue to build on this momentum with a goal of placing on average more than 20 graduating seniors each year into prestigious post-graduate fellowships and appointments. In support of this goal, Mercer will appoint a dedicated fellowship coordinator.

Enhance graduate school placement. A growing percentage of Mercer undergraduates continue their studies in graduate and professional schools, including many of the most outstanding programs in the country. We are currently developing means of measuring the success of our students in obtaining entry into high-quality post-graduate study and commit to developing metrics to accurately monitor the growing success of our graduates in obtaining these appointments. In support of this initiative, the Provost will appoint a Professional School Council to assist in advising students, and we will appoint a dedicated staff member to assist with graduate school advising in conjunction with coordination of fellowships. We will also ensure that faculty are appropriately recognized for success in advising and placing students into graduate and professional programs, beginning with ensuring that such activities are tracked through the Activity Insight system.

Increase internship opportunities and preparation for career success. Almost all Mercer graduates secure meaningful employment within a reasonable time following graduation. We must continue working to ensure that our students have high-quality and meaningful employment opportunities.

To this end, we will continue to enhance internship opportunities to provide students with more information from which to make career choices, with a goal that more than 90 percent of our undergraduate students will have an internship/field experience prior to graduation. In order to enhance career opportunities for our students, we will add a dedicated staff member for internship development and employer relations. The data is clear that internships, particularly paid internships, make candidates much more attractive in an increasingly competitive

job market. We will work more closely with faculty to develop appropriate internship offerings for academic credit. We will also add a resource to support post-traditional and distance learning students in their career objectives. In addition, we will also increase career development programming for all students, including preparation for entrepreneurship and more targeted and specialized career events on campus.

Enhance our culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.

An increasing number of students and prospective students want to create their own enterprises, rather than working for someone else. These students want to learn how to create an enterprise, but they also want to answer the question of "why" in a meaningful way. They are committed to doing well by doing good — by using their entrepreneurial inclinations to develop innovations that will make a positive difference in the lives of others.

We are already seeing a growing number of recent graduates and even current students striking out on their own forming companies that import and sell coffee, consult on data analytics, use technology for tracking, and make furniture among many other ventures. Other students are working toward patenting a marketable mercury capture system that can be used to protect gold miners in the developing world. Mercer is committed to equipping these students with the knowledge and skills required for success as innovators and entrepreneurs, through appropriate interdisciplinary academic programming as well as clinical experiences available through the Mercer Innovation Center.



Achieve top licensing outcomes. Graduates in a number of our professional schools must pass a licensing examination before they are permitted to begin working in their chosen profession. Law, medicine, nursing, physician assistant studies, physical therapy, pharmacy, and counseling are among these. Graduates of these programs cannot become outstanding professionals in their respective fields without first passing their licensing examinations. As part of their individual strategic plans, Mercer's professional schools and colleges will establish appropriately ambitious targets for licensure exam passage rates, recognizing that these rates

will be an important metric used by the University in evaluating their success.

6

COMPETING WITH THE BEST

As one of America's premier private research universities, Mercer will compete with the finest institutions of higher learning in every worthwhile endeavor. Our recent national championship in debate, as well as national and international awards won by students in our renowned Robert McDuffie



Imperative 6: COMPETING WITH THE BEST

•
Mercer will continue to meet NCAA criteria for Graduation Success Rate (90 percent or higher) and Academic Progress Rate (.985 or higher) among student-athletes.

•
Ensure student-athletes have the opportunity to participate in meaningful co-curricular activities such as undergraduate research and study abroad.

•
The Director of Athletics and Provost will develop tools to enable the University to assess our success in instilling habits of character in student-athletes.

•
Maintain robust culture of compliance with NCAA regulations.

•
Compete regularly for Southern Conference championships and NCAA-sponsored post-season competition.

•
Schedule high-quality academic institutions for non-conference contests.

Center for Strings are examples. Our commitment to competing with the best certainly extends to intercollegiate athletics, which provide important learning and development opportunities for student-athletes, helps build community among University constituencies, and facilitates marketing of the institution.

Remain consistent with academic mission. We must always conduct the intercollegiate athletics program at Mercer in a way that is consistent with the academic mission of the University. Our student-athletes are here primarily to successfully complete academic programs. We carefully monitor the academic performance of our student-athletes and expect high levels of achievement. During the most recent academic year, Mercer student-athletes collectively had a grade point average above 3.4. This high level of achievement is consistent with institutional expectations.

The NCAA has announced that it will begin making financial distributions to conferences based on the academic achievement of student-athletes at the conference's

member institutions. Under the criteria relevant to high-quality institutions like Mercer, an annual point is awarded to the conference if one of its member institutions has an overall Academic Progress Rate (APR) among student-athletes of .985 or more, or alternatively, has a Graduation Success Rate (GSR) among student-athletes of 90 percent or higher. During the most recent academic year, Mercer student-athletes had an overall APR of .986 and a GSR of 92 percent, satisfying both of the alternative requirements for earning an academic distribution point. Our expectation is that Mercer will continue to meet both of these criteria for assessing academic performance on an annual basis.

We also expect our student-athletes to have access to meaningful co-curricular activities, including the opportunity to engage in faculty-directed undergraduate research, to participate in study abroad, and to participate in service learning. The first NCAA Division I football student-athlete to win the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship is a Mercer student. Our effort to design and deploy a system to protect small-scale gold miners in South America from mercury contamination is being facilitated by a women's basketball student-athlete. We expect our coaches to ensure that student-athletes have the opportunity to participate in these transformational experiences.

Ensure value-added learning experiences. Participation in intercollegiate athletics can provide valuable learning experiences, supplementing lessons being learned in our classrooms and laboratories. To be successful, student-athletes must develop the discipline of time management, must learn to function effectively as a team member, must learn how to respond effectively to the disappointment of a loss, and how to demonstrate grace in the face of victory. Our coaches must teach and model these attributes as an essential component of their responsibilities. Our Director of Athletics, working with our Provost, will develop tools over the next year that enable us to assess accurately our success in instilling



these habits of character in our student-athletes.

Compete with integrity. Mercer has never had a major infraction of NCAA regulations, the only one of the six Division I institutions in Georgia to enjoy this distinction. It is absolutely imperative that we never sacrifice the honor of this important institution of higher learning. We will continue to maintain a robust culture of compliance throughout the University community.

Compete successfully. Being committed to academic success, ensuring that our student-athletes have the same engaged learning experiences as all other students, and competing with integrity does not mean that competitive outcomes are irrelevant. Competing at the NCAA Division I level is expensive. To realize an appropriate return on this investment, we must compete successfully against high-quality competition. Only through competitive success against other high-quality institutions will intercollegiate athletics at Mercer effectively build community among our constituents and facilitate marketing of the University and its academic programs. We value the contributions of all 18 of our intercollegiate athletics programs and support our student-athletes in each of these programs, but we recognize that the external market places a premium on sports that attract the most public attention in the United States.

We expect to compete regularly for Southern Conference championships and NCAA-sponsored post-season competition. Our baseball program has won the regular season championship



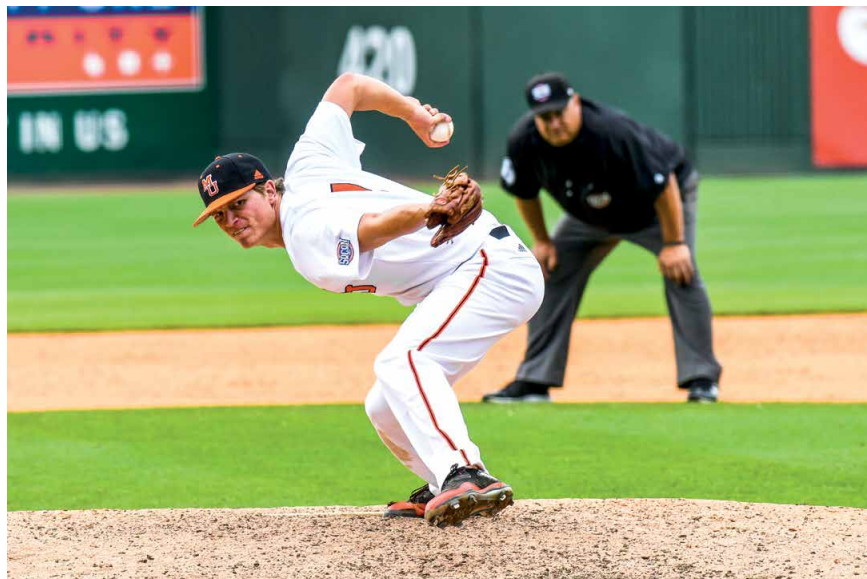
in each of the three seasons we have competed in the Southern Conference. A Mercer student-athlete won the Golden Spikes Trophy as the college baseball player of the year in 2016. Our women's basketball program has won or shared the Southern Conference championship in each of the past three seasons, including a consensus top 25 national ranking at the conclusion of the 2017-18 regular season and an appearance in the NCAA tournament. Our football program continues to progress after its reinstatement in 2012, having received recognition in *Sports Illustrated* this past season after almost defeating SEC power Auburn and then taking on eventual national champion Alabama, and is positioned to compete for the Southern Conference championship in 2018. Our men's basketball program achieved the greatest victory in Mercer athletics history when it defeated Duke in the second round of the 2014 NCAA tournament, thereby demonstrating the type of positive publicity that can flow from competitive success in intercollegiate athletics.

We intend to schedule high-quality academic institutions for non-conference contests. Our upcoming four-year series with Yale in football is an example. A neutral-site contest with Harvard in men's basketball scheduled for December 2018 in Philips Arena in Atlanta is another. The Southern Conference is the right home for our intercollegiate athletics program precisely because of the quality of academic institutions that make up this historic and prestigious conference.

7 BEING TRUE TO OUR HERITAGE

Founded by Baptists, Mercer University took root in a fertile religious tradition born out of protest and a commitment to honoring our God-given dignity, protecting our inviolable freedom, and engaging in just and compassionate service.

At the confluence of dignity, freedom, and service, our particular



7

Imperative 7:

BEING TRUE TO OUR HERITAGE

•
Continue to be shaped by Mercer's foundational values, expressed more in deeds than in rhetoric and affiliations.

•
Guarantee that all members of the University community have the broadest possible latitude to think, to listen, and to express themselves.

•
Seek a \$15 million endowment to support Mercer On Mission in perpetuity.

•
Increase annual student participation in Mercer On Mission from 250 to 400 and faculty participation from 40 to 75.

•
In all of its public statements regarding religious heritage and values, Mercer will express its commitment to openness and inclusion and to inspiring students to lives of service.

tradition merges with many other rich traditions within and beyond the Christian religion. Mercer will continue to be shaped by these foundational values, expressed more in deeds than in rhetoric and affiliations.

Embrace a free and critical search for truth as a way of glorifying God. Freedom of inquiry and expression is central to a transformational and empowering education. Our free-church heritage urges us in this direction because at the center of Baptist convictions is the demand for intellectual freedom. Mercer will seek to enrich the mind and spirit by promoting and facilitating an open and rigorous search for truth and understanding.

Because the University is committed to intellectual freedom, it guarantees all members of the University community the broadest possible latitude to think, to listen, and to express themselves. This necessarily includes the freedom to express and listen to ideas that most find disagreeable and even offensive. Likewise, it includes the freedom to respond to expressions that one finds disagreeable and offensive, provided that response does not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the expressive freedom of others. These principles are more easily stated than honored — but honor them we must if we are to be true to our heritage.

Inspire members of the Mercer community to use their gifts and talents to serve the needs of humankind as an expression of their love for God and neighbor. Our founding tradition teaches that the ultimate test of faith is service to the least of our neighbors. Through programs such as Mercer On Mission and MerServe, its domestic counterpart, members of our community live out the instruction to love one's

neighbor as ourselves. Our students and faculty have made the lame to walk in Vietnam, provided clean water to the thirsty in Africa and the Dominican Republic, and made the sick well with mercury containment programs in South America and medical clinics in Cambodia.

Here at home, Mercer students contribute hundreds of thousands of hours of service each year to communities across the state. Collectively, this commitment to service has earned Mercer the highest national recognition through programs such as the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. And in 2018, the United Way of Central Georgia awarded its annual "Volunteer of the Year" Award collectively to the Mercer student body, in recognition of the impact Mercer students have on the community.

As we move into the future, Mercer will seek an endowment in excess of \$15 million for Mercer On Mission to guarantee adequate funding for the preservation in perpetuity of this important expression of Mercer's faith tradition. This endowment will enable us to increase the level of annual student participation from more than 250 to more than 400. By consolidating several teams of faculty and students at a single site to form a holistic response to the needs of the host community, we can achieve greater impact from our work while facilitating this higher level of student opportunity.

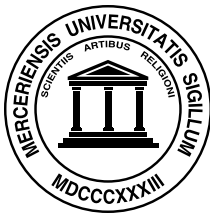
Mercer will cultivate Mercer On Mission faculty leaders from the various disciplines across the schools and colleges of the University. At the current 5.5 ratio of students to faculty, which has proven to be effective, raising annual student participation to at least 400 will require approximately 75 faculty members to participate annually. Increasing the number of participating faculty will require recruiting faculty who are drawn especially to the distinctive mission of this University.

We recognize that many mistakenly feel a tension between religious heritage on the one hand and inclusivity and freedom on the other. It is essential in all our public statements regarding religious heritage and values that we express our commitment to freedom, openness and inclusion and to inspiring students to lives of service.

These values represent the best of a heritage that has guided this important institution of higher learning for nearly 200 years. Like great books, these values are timeless. As they have empowered and inspired generations of Mercerians, they will shape the future of this institution. They inform the entirety of this strategic plan. They inform our vision of a special place — a place unique in the world of higher education — a vibrant and exciting world-class research university that is authentically committed to marshaling its resources to inspire a community of scholars and innovators to deploy their gifts and talents to meet the needs of humankind. If Jesse Mercer could somehow visit this place — this institution bearing his name and representing his legacy — we believe he would smile.



TO TEACH, TO LEARN,
TO CREATE, TO DISCOVER,
TO INSPIRE, TO EMPOWER,
AND TO SERVE.



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