Purpose of Our Strategic Plan

*Emory Campus Life Strategic Plan 2015-2020* provides a foundation for building a nimble, dynamic organization that intentionally and creatively embraces the challenges and opportunities facing higher education today – challenges in demographics, technology, politics, and more.

Such an approach represents a significant course change from traditional student affairs strategic plans and organizations. It reflects our desire not only to follow best practices, but to create them.

Through our strategic planning process, we are called to strive for excellence and refuse to settle for the status quo. This requires risk-taking, innovation, and experimentation with, among other things, language and ideas.

Toward that end, this preamble outlines shared language and ideas that will help us successfully implement *Strategic Plan 2015-2020*. The language and ideas present an opportunity for us to find meaning in the terms we use, based on our shared values and collective work.

Paradigm Shift: Beyond Community of Care to Community of Practice

Two years ago, Emory Campus Life launched an innovative first-year orientation program called Creating Emory, from which *Care* emerged as a key concept. Through feedback from our stakeholders, we recognized that care is a difficult concept to define and difficult to practice unless we are practicing community together.

The Campus Life Strategic Plan introduces a new framework for building community beyond the notion of care. Although there are many other aspects to practicing community, we focus in this document on two key concepts that require a paradigm shift in our thinking. Our hope is that the definitions below encourage further dialogue on who we are as a community and who we want to become.

What does it Mean to Practice Community?

A community of practice leverages personal, local, national, and global resources to enact shared values, passions, and concerns to learn together and positively transform individuals, our community, and the world.

A community of practice is regenerative. There will inevitably be moments when our community struggles with its own values and commitments due to the dynamic nature of the community and society. The community will make mistakes, but we must be willing and able to show compassion and forgiveness and ultimately grow from these mistakes.

Framework for a Community of Practice

- Our community aspires to enable freedom and growth through a liberal arts education that encourages lifelong exploration and the pursuit of truth.
- We are a community of many communities.
- Our community includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, families, and other stakeholders.
- We are individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, who believe in uniting as a community with a shared sense of purpose, passion, concern, and commitment.
- We aspire to ensure a sense of belonging for individuals and communities by engaging, embracing, and affirming the identities of all community members.
- Our community members aspire to embrace polyculturalism – the belief that cultures are dynamic and socially constructed through our interactions, influences, and exchanges with each other.
- Our community members aspire to have the opportunity to seamlessly traverse many cultural fields in authentic contexts and be their authentic selves.
- Community dialogue ideally occurs through physical proximity.
- Learning is more effective when it occurs in dialogue with others.
- Building trust and humility are essential components of community building and learning.

Vision Statement

*Emory Campus Life, a community recognized internationally for advancing education into action and delivering world-class programs and services, promotes a healthy and sustainable environment where students live what they learn and learn what they live for self and society. Emory Campus Life catalyzes a distinctive, caring, inquiry-driven, ethically engaged, polycultural, and socially just community of students, faculty, staff, alumni, families, and visitors that imagine and lead positive transformation in the world.*

Mission Statement

*Emory Campus Life cultivates a welcoming and dynamic community that is committed to developing skills necessary for lifelong success and positive transformation in the world.*
What is Polyculturalism?

Polyculturalism is the belief that cultures are dynamic and socially constructed through our interactions, influences, and exchanges with each other, but it simultaneously values the identities that are most salient to us. It builds on but is significantly different from multiculturalism, the dominant paradigm of recent decades.

Multiculturalism represents a transition away from society’s historic oppression of marginalized groups. However, it defines individuals primarily by race, religion, ethnicity, or similarly narrow criteria. That places each of us in categories that too often disregard our other identities and overlook our shared humanity. The paradigm of multiculturalism has stymied debate and dialogue and, although it has led to incremental change, it has inhibited radical change on our campuses.

Today’s students are growing up in a wonderfully diverse, polycultural global society that increasingly acknowledges and embraces our individual “multidimensionality” as complex beings, each with many identities. Yet, these students often find themselves living within an environment that limits learning and development.

Polyculturalism opens the doors to what today’s students require— the opportunity to seamlessly traverse many cultural fields to discover new ways of knowing and understanding one another and the world around us.

Polyculturalism resists the notion of post-racialism; instead, polyculturalism calls for support spaces to affirm our complex individual and group identities. It also allows our “safe spaces” to emerge to educate the broader community about histories and experiences that have been ignored or essentialized through attempts to compartmentalize identities. It creates spaces of mobilization, nurtures a sense of belonging, and affirms individual and group identities.

A polycultural community of practice appreciates that each of us is the sum of many identities and requires us to struggle together to enunciate how we differ and where we connect with one another.

A polycultural community of practice moves away from a predetermined political vision that imagines a utopian multicultural community that is merely caring, celebratory, tolerant, and devoid of conflict.

What Are Our Community Values?

**Flourishing Community.** We will inspire and empower all members of the Emory community to optimize their potential by encouraging physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being.

**Critical Inquiry.** We are committed to engagement that challenges and supports community members in their efforts to critically question the world and themselves by pursuing authentic, free, and open exploration.

**Cultural Humility.** We will catalyze lifelong self-reflection and self-critique that fosters polycultural exchange and community building in pursuit of authentic engagement with the world.

**Courageous Integrity.** We will create lifelong leaders who are committed to ethical decision-making and principled behavior and inspire positive transformation in the world.

**Social Justice.** We will promote an inclusive and diverse community that challenges injustice, affords equitable access to resources, and affirms and appreciates our differences and intersections as members of the Emory community.

**Personal and Professional Excellence.** We will share knowledge, expand skills, develop new ways of knowing and understanding, and develop innovative models of collaboration that strengthen our community.

**Key Questions to Achieve our Community Values**

- Caring is one aspect of community. What are other fundamental aspects of community?
- What are our sites outside the classroom for learning and dialogue?
- What are our sites for learning to negotiate conflict?
- Emory is a community of many communities, but are all of our communities accessible and flourishing? Are all individuals flourishing?
- How do we build trust and humility among our community members?
- How do current local, national, and global contexts impact our conceptualizations of community and the development of community?
- How can our institutional values help build community?

**Strategic Plan Shared Opportunities**

Strategic shared opportunities are collective priorities that will ultimately define our common goals, guide their development, and chart intentional steps to achieve progress. They represent critical opportunities for all of us and, as such, require engagement at every level throughout Emory Campus Life. The four current shared opportunities appear on the following page.
Values: Cultural Humility and Flourishing Community
Shared Opportunity: Practice Community
Definition: To encourage students to struggle together to enunciate how they differ and where they intersect; and to foster a sense of belonging in all of our students.

Values: Critical Inquiry and Courageous Integrity
Shared Opportunity: Support Academic Engagement and Student Success
Definition: To challenge and support students to optimize their academic, career, and social mobility through self-discovery, intellectual inquiry, and polycultural exchange.

Values: Flourishing Community and Personal and Professional Excellence
Shared Opportunity: Develop Impact and Influence
Definition: To enact shared values, passions, and concerns as a community to seek positive transformation in our community and the world.

Values: Social Justice and Flourishing Community
Shared Opportunity: Create a Safe, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment
Definition: To engage in practices that positively impact our health and collective well-being, safety, and environment.

- Rosenthal, L., Levy, S., & Flansba, M. Polyculturalism and sexist attitudes: Believing cultures are dynamic relates to lower sexism.