

Note: This is the report from the committee that worked to gather widespread feedback from A&S faculty on the current state of research, scholarship, and creative activity in the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, and to develop proposals for investment and growth. The recommendations in this report are advisory to the Dean. Members of the Dean's Office extend their gratitude to the committee for their service to A&S, and to the faculty for their participation in the strategic planning process during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Report from the Committee for Strategic Planning for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity in Arts & Sciences at the University of Virginia

Chairs: Fiona Greenland (Sociology)
John Darrell Van Horn (Psychology)

Steering Committee Members:

Jack Chen (East Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures &
Institute of the Humanities and Global Culture)
David Getsy (Art)
Andrew Kahrl (History & African American Studies)
Aynne Kokas (Media Studies & East Asia Center)
David Parichy (Biology)
Sally Pusede (Environmental Sciences)

Arts Core: Mona Kasra (Art)
Nicole Mitchell Gantt (Music)

Humanities
Core: Anna Brickhouse (English & American Studies)
Ashon Crawley (Religious Studies & African American Studies)

Quantitative
Core: Daniel Gingerich (Politics & Quantitative Collaborative)
Sheetal Sekhri (Economics)

Dean's Office: Laura Galloway, Associate Dean for Research
Jessica McDermott, Assistant Director for Academic Administration

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Executive Summary

Research excellence bolsters a university's reputation, attracting funding, partnerships, and talent. It drives societal progress and economic growth by addressing real-world challenges and fostering innovation. Actively monitoring research excellence empowers universities to lead in knowledge advancement, innovation, and societal impact.

In November 2023, the UVA College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences established a faculty committee to examine the current state and potential growth of research, scholarship, and creative activity in A&S. The Dean charged committee members with three main tasks:

- 1) Identifying improvements needed to enhance the research climate;
- 2) Exploring areas of research excellence among A&S' three divisions; and
- 3) Considering how faculty research and scholarly output might be advanced through Arts, Humanities, and Quantitative Cores.

In what follows, we outline the process under which this examination progressed and provide specific recommendations on where, should investments be made, there exist opportunities for a significant return on those investments in the form of increased scholarship, research funding, faculty support, and research student success.

Purpose: Building a “culture of excellence” in Arts and Sciences research is paramount for fostering innovation, advancing knowledge, and driving societal progress. It establishes a framework where rigorous inquiry, critical thinking, and intellectual curiosity thrive, leading to discoveries that shape our understanding of the world. Within such a culture, researchers are encouraged to pursue ambitious goals, push the boundaries of their fields, and collaborate across disciplines to tackle complex challenges. This environment not only attracts top-tier talent but also cultivates a spirit of collaboration, where diverse perspectives and methodologies converge to generate novel insights. Moreover, a culture of excellence in research instills a commitment to ethical conduct, transparency, and integrity, ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of scholarly endeavors. Ultimately, by nurturing a culture of excellence, academic institutions empower researchers to make meaningful contributions to their disciplines, address pressing global issues, and enrich the collective body of human knowledge for the betterment of society. The committee was charged with identifying ways to bolster this culture of research excellence through targeted A&S investments in research operations, organization, and infrastructure.

Process: The following components formed the basis of the committee’s approach to gathering information on the current strengths of UVA A&S, identifying where potential investments might be made, and evaluating faculty proposals for research investments.

Steering Committee Formation: A Steering Committee was established to oversee the process, provide guidance, ensure transparency, and facilitate communication between A&S faculty and the A&S Dean's office. Steering Committee members were selected by the Dean's office to ensure equal representation of A&S divisions: Arts and Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences.

Core Area Sub-Committees: Three Sub-Committees were formed adjacent to the Steering Committee, each focusing on a specific academic discipline or thematic area within the College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences with a goal of developing proposals for research cores in those areas. These sub-committees conducted in-depth reviews of research strengths, met with faculty and department chairs, and identified areas for improvement within their respective disciplinary areas.

A&S Divisional Meetings I: Divisional focus group meetings were held within A&S to gather input from faculty members and departmental representatives regarding research strengths and potential areas for growth. These focus groups provided valuable insights into the diverse perspectives within the College and Graduate School, and helped inform the development of subsequent steps in the process.

Meetings with Department Chairs: Meetings were conducted with department chairs to discuss department-specific research strengths, challenges, and opportunities. These meetings allowed for focused discussions on areas of expertise and potential strategies for enhancing research productivity within each A&S division and/or department.

Online A&S Survey: An online Qualtrics survey was distributed to A&S faculty members with research, scholarship, and/or creative activity as part of the scope of their roles. Designed to gather feedback on research strengths and areas for potential investment, the survey provided a broader perspective and allowed for anonymous input from a wide range of faculty members.

Update Meetings with Dean Acampora: Update meetings were held with Dean Acampora to discuss progress, share findings from various activities, and solicit feedback on potential strategies for enhancing research excellence within the college.

Town Hall Meetings: Town hall meetings were organized to engage faculty members, staff, and students in discussions about research priorities, challenges, and opportunities within the College of Arts and Sciences. These meetings provided a platform for open dialogue and collaboration across the college community.

Examination of Academic Analytics for UVA and peer-institutions: Statistics from the Academic Analytics service were examined to benchmark research performance and identify areas of strength and weakness compared to peer institutions. This analysis provided valuable insights into A&S' position within the broader academic landscape and informed strategic planning efforts.

Consideration of data within UVA's Sponsored Programs dashboard: Information about research proposals and award dollars for faculty within the Arts and Sciences was considered as part of a strategy to explore the state of the College and Graduate School's current research endeavor. It also served as a springboard for ideas on potential impact of research investments.

A&S Divisional Meetings II: Follow-up divisional focus group meetings were conducted to present preliminary findings and gather additional feedback from faculty members and departmental representatives. These meetings ensured that the evaluation process remained inclusive and transparent.

Solicitation of and Receipt of Research Ideas from Faculty: A&S faculty members were invited to submit ideas for investments to support research activities within the College of Arts and Sciences. These ideas were reviewed and considered as part of the overall evaluation process.

Report Preparation: Based on the findings and input gathered from various activities, a comprehensive report was prepared for Dean Acampora summarizing current research strengths, areas for improvement, and recommended strategies for enhancing research excellence within the UVA College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. It is our goal that this report serves as a roadmap for future initiatives and resource allocation decisions which enhance and enrich the quality of research here at UVA A&S, promoting a culture of excellence, and raising the profile and reputation of A&S nationally and globally.

Outcomes Summary: A variety of recommendations related to 1) research investments, 2) focal areas of research, scholarship, and creative excellence, and 3) Cores are summarized in the remainder of the report.

Recommendations for A&S Research Investment

In every form of feedback the committee received from A&S faculty, research support and time constraints emerged as critical to enhancing research activities. These needs were perceived as limiting faculty's potential to engage in the quality of research, scholarship, and creative activity required to reach our aspirations. For A&S faculty across all divisions, research types, and career stages, the first step in the path toward achieving research excellence requires broad investments in the resources faculty most value.

What follows is a set of recurring themes of where strategic investments could unleash research productivity. The list reflects priorities indicated in the faculty survey, and reports from the Core leaders and the Steering committee after speaking with their colleagues. There are likely more suggestions than can be acted upon in initial investments. However, we felt it important to convey the broad set of potential improvements as faculty see these impeding their research success.

- Increased Research Funding for research active SS/A&H faculty; applications (if needed) should be brief and straightforward to put together and to evaluate. Consider adding this funding to incentivize submission of fellowship/grant applications, possibly increasing support for faculty who have submitted applications.
- Seed Funding. On-going program, 2 calls/year, 1-year projects. Prioritize collaboration, but not required. Possible support of a GRA with more limited discretionary funding. Expectation of submission of a grant proposal. Sciences, potential SS/A&H.
- Staff support:
 - Research Development/Proposal Preparation. Stated priority in all divisions. Recommend two positions with (1) Sciences and (2) Arts & Humanities/Social Sciences expertise; expect familiarity with foundations.
 - Research Communication/Publicity. Across sciences, social sciences, creative arts and humanities there is a need for help communicating and publicizing important new findings.
 - Technical Staff. Increase technical staff to facilitate instrumentation use/maintenance in the sciences and creative arts.
 - Future: Illustration support. Increasingly, impactful illustrations are expected in grant proposals and articles in high-impact journals. These expectations are typically met by a staff member with experience in graphics; there is some expertise available through the OVRP.
- Flexible Teaching Schedules & Merit-based Teaching Release. Enable focused research time through a program in which one course can be shifted between semesters. Establish a competitive, merit-based teaching release program to provide focused

research time for faculty with strong records. (Merit-based teaching release dovetails with a potential Provost initiative.)

- Increase Endowed Chair Research Funds. Recognize top research faculty through an increase in annual research funds (now \$3,500/year).
- (non-monetary) Meeting space. Develop Morvan as a space for larger colloquia/workshops; idea aligns with Provost's office vision of that space.
- (non-monetary) Communication of Funding Opportunities. More regular, comprehensive communication of internal funding opportunities.
- (non-monetary) Administrative Support. Evaluate staff support for administrative tasks in each A&S department; report results with transparency of staff support and expected responsibilities of staff and faculty.
- Equipment Maintenance. Develop a mechanism to maintain technical equipment and support service contracts (sciences/arts). High quality equipment made financially possible through ETF is a huge asset, though a lack of support for maintenance limits its useful lifespan.
- Incentivize Sponsored Research. Consider incentive structures for sponsored program/fellowship proposal submission and funding receipt, e.g. F&A return policies.
- Magnetic Resonance Core. An MRI brain imaging facility is needed in *Central Grounds* where it could serve researchers in A&S and the School of Education and Human Development. The proposed core would be a university-wide resource, under the umbrella of UVA Cores.

Suggestions already in progress in A&S:

- Increase graduate student numbers & funding
- Increase support for administrative tasks
 - *Post-award support*: 3 hires this year – faculty can now receive grant balances without entering workday
 - *Divisional support teams*: financial/purchasing support, event support, back-up support for departments
 - *Advising changes*: removal of lower division advising responsibilities
 - *Annual reporting*: reduced detail in future reporting
 - *Peer review*: reduced frequency
 - *Staff support*: professional development, career progression, recognition possibilities
- Exploration into the feasibility of converting from a 9-month faculty pay period model to a 12-month model

Areas of Excellence in A&S Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

This section recommends investment in specific research areas from A&S Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences. Our recommendations are based on extensive study by the Steering Committee Co-Chairs, and discussions between Steering Committee members, the Core co-chairs, and faculty members throughout A&S. We invited proposals for research support in focus groups, town halls, chairs' meetings, and the survey. The proposals recommended here stand out for their academic distinction and exceptional pathways for collaboration, growth, and societal impact. They exemplify potential for high-caliber collaborative interaction and scholarly achievement, and serve as focal areas for innovation, knowledge creation, interdisciplinary connections, and creativity. In short, each project embodies the College and Graduate School's commitment to excellence. Each one has strong potential to raise the profile of UVA and enrich A&S scholarly productivity and funding competitiveness.

Arts and Humanities

A&S Arts and Humanities faculty are internationally recognized for work in several domains including literature, creative writing, music composition, public art, and born digital art. As part of the Strategic Research Planning process, steering committee members worked closely with the co-chairs of the Arts Core and Humanities Core to identify opportunities for excellence. They determined that a mutual effort would be most effective for addressing the research and creative needs of faculty across the departments. This work culminated in a proposal for an Institute for Arts and Humanities, which is summarized below.

The second proposal recommended by the committee is the Global Spanish Studies Initiative, which would boost the existing strengths in UVA Spanish language, geography, politics, and cultural research and bringing pedagogy to a new level. For instance, UVA's Spanish faculty are unique in their expertise in the Spanish diaspora. While many Spanish departments in the United States tend to focus on the literature and language of Spain, our department has broad geographic knowledge, as demonstrated by innovative, award-winning comparative research that pushes the boundaries of what Spanish studies can and should look like. A&S faculty from a variety of disciplines engage in research, scholarship, and creative activity related to the Spanish-speaking world, and opportunities to engage in collaborative research abound.

Institute for Arts and Humanities

The proposal for the Institute of the Arts and Humanities (IAH) emerges from the collaborative efforts of several faculty members in response to discussions surrounding the need to bolster support for the Arts and Humanities at UVA. Following town hall meetings and subsequent discussions with Arts and Humanities Cores, the proposers decided to combine two areas of activity: the existing Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures (IHGC) and a new Institute for Experimental Arts. The merged proposal aims to provide a specific and detailed argument supporting the work of Arts and Humanities faculty, emphasizing the importance of funding, time allocation, and community engagement.

The integrated IAH would combine the existing IHGC with the proposed Institute for Experimental Arts, featuring two directors—one from the Arts and one from Humanities—and a shared governing board with equal representation from both domains. The envisioned institute seeks to position the arts at the core of humanistic inquiry and understanding by fostering interdisciplinary research, collaboration, and dialogue among scholars, artists, and creative practitioners. It emphasizes the significant role of the arts in addressing aesthetic, ethical, political, and social dimensions of human experience and aims to catalyze insights and broaden perspectives.

Central to the proposed IAH is the establishment of the Society of Arts and Humanities Fellows, wherein ten fellows would be selected annually through a competitive process, each receiving two course releases and actively contributing to the institute's intellectual vibrancy. Additionally, the institute would continue to sponsor Labs to facilitate interdisciplinary collaborative research work while also establishing an Experimental Arts Outpost, here in Charlottesville, centralizing and showcasing shared research resources, works in progress, and facilitating the development of integrated and community projects. Moreover, the IAH would offer semester-long creative residencies for UVA arts faculty and host visiting scholars and artists to participate in short-term educational or research projects.

Measure of excellence: Several department chairs identified the arts and humanities as some of A&S' most significant contributors to excellence in research, scholarly inquiry, and creative activity. Large-scale data supports this notion—eight of the thirteen UVA Arts and Humanities departments are in the 60th percentile or higher nationally, among public AAU institutions, and among all AAUs (Academic Analytics). Four of these departments are in the 80th percentile or higher among each of these groups. Investing in an institute would facilitate collaboration and growth of this already strong group.

Global Spanish Initiative

The Global Spanish Initiative seeks to solidify University of Virginia's longstanding commitment to Spanish language and culture by establishing a comprehensive interdisciplinary program. Recognizing the historical significance of Spanish at UVA, dating back to its founding, the initiative aims to position the university as a global leader for the study of Hispanophone cultures. With nearly sixty million Spanish speakers in the United States and a significant Spanish-speaking population in Virginia, the initiative emphasizes the importance of recognizing and studying non-Anglophone traditions and histories that shape global society.

The mission of the Global Spanish Initiative is to foster transformative research and creative work and build connections among Spanish-speaking communities worldwide. It will explore the literatures, histories, arts, and cultures of Spanish-speaking peoples, including indigenous, heritage, and minority languages and cultures. Through initiatives such as symposia, conferences, workshops, and annual publication series programs, the initiative aims to create outstanding educational opportunities for students and faculty. Additionally, it seeks to expand access to archives for scholarly research, offer residential fellowships, and curate cultural and scholarly programming to bring diverse voices to UVA and central Virginia.

The initiative plans to serve educators within and beyond academia through enrichment and creative activity opportunities, as well as offer authentic cultural engagement and immersive experiential programming for the UVA and Charlottesville communities. This includes sponsorship of Spanish language theater and performance, co-programming with cultural festivals, poetry readings, dance performances, music recitals, and art exhibitions.

The initiative builds on existing Spanish language and cultural scholarship and creative work by faculty across disciplines. Partnerships with prominent cultural institutions in Spain and Mexico will enhance scholarly, cultural, and pedagogical opportunities. With a strong emphasis on research support and interdisciplinary collaboration, the initiative aims to diversify disciplinary practices and create sustainable avenues for supporting new and existing research. The initiative has garnered broad support and enthusiasm across the university and is supported by a broadly representative faculty advisory board comprised.

Measure of excellence: Global Spanish Studies initiative seeks to pair scholars from UVA's language department with the highest Scholarly Research Index (i.e., Spanish which is in the 92nd percentile or above nationally, among public AAU institutions, and among all AAUs) with researchers, scholars, and creative artists from similarly productive departments such as Art, Creative Writing, Music, History, Media Studies, and Sociology. Opportunities for cross-divisional and cross-school collaborations abound under Global Spanish Studies, positioning Arts & Sciences as a potential leader in the study of one of the world's most spoken languages and the cultures it impacts.

Social Sciences

UVA Arts and Sciences boasts robust Social Sciences departments, distinguished by their breadth of subject area, faculty diversity and expertise, and research productivity. One particularly notable strength lies in the comprehensive understanding of local and global crises and their management. Faculty members across disciplines such as Sociology, Political Science, and Psychology conduct cutting-edge research on various aspects of crises, including their causes, impacts, and effective strategies for mitigation and recovery. Whether analyzing natural disasters, economic downturns, or social conflicts, UVA scholars offer valuable insights that inform policy decisions and contribute to the development of resilient communities. This expertise is reinforced by the Environmental Institute, supported through the university-led Grand Challenges initiative.

Furthermore, UVA excels in the quantitative social sciences, particularly in fields like economics. With an accomplished faculty comprising leading economists and statisticians, A&S faculty conduct groundbreaking research in areas such as econometrics, labor economics, and public finance. Through rigorous empirical analysis and advanced statistical techniques, our research contributes to our understanding of complex social phenomena and provides evidence-based solutions to pressing societal challenges. This work not only advances academic knowledge but can also be used to inform policymakers, businesses, and organizations worldwide, making a significant impact on both local and global scales.

Crisis Studies Initiative

UVA faculty are recognized nationally for their expertise in Crisis Studies. Crisis is a broad topic and necessitates a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives. For example, UVA Sociology has ten tenure-track faculty whose work is fully or mostly focused on crisis, and the department stands out for its diverse specialized expertise in analyzing crucial areas related to this topic such as global finance, supply chains, the ascent of China, environmental protection, cultural identities, and political regimes and formations. This breadth of knowledge enables an exploration of crisis and its management from multiple vantage points, fostering an overarching understanding of how crises across various domains of life have been addressed and how post-crisis outcomes are evaluated and learned from.

The Crisis Studies Initiative would harness this expertise across disciplines and develop a three-year intensive project of research, publishing, student development, and national convenings. Funding would position UVA A&S as an international presence in crisis studies.

The Department of Sociology is ideally positioned to serve as a central node in a broader network of expertise at UVA, which the Crisis Studies Initiative aims to establish and support. In addition to receiving awards for impactful work, investment in this area could simultaneously benefit society while propelling Arts and Sciences crisis research standing to new levels of excellence.

Measure of excellence: US News and World Reports ranks UVA Sociology #9 in the United States for sociology of culture, one of the key subfields of knowledge in the study of *why* and *how* certain types of events become crises. Academic Analytics ranks research from the UVA Sociology faculty in the 94th percentile nationally, the 81st percentile among AAU Institutions, and the 92nd percentile among public AAUs. This level of productivity is notable given that UVA's Sociology department is smaller than peers with similar Scholarly Research scores.

Quantitative Collaborative

The Quantitative Collaborative (QC) is a well-established program that has been successful in convening interdisciplinary research workshops and supporting A&S faculty research projects. Existing measures of excellence include high rates of peer-reviewed publications in top journals, impactful research (as measured by citations), robust attendance by A&S faculty and graduate students at QC events, and success in winning highly competitive extramural funding.

We propose to build on this highly successful program, increasing its size and reach, while retaining its mission of facilitating research, collaboration, training, and communication that has created a proven track record. Enhancing the QC's scope and infrastructure will increase its impact on the A&S community.

This expansion has three goals:

- Develop thematic areas/clusters that support deep collaboration among A&S faculty members. Potential areas include the Environment, Conflict and Peace, Identity, Political Economy, Media, Money, and Markets.
- Expand the QC initiative outside of A&S. This includes across UVA, including Data Science, Batten, Darden, McIntyre, Biocomplexity, Education, Engineering, Nursing, and Public Health. As well as internationally, across R1 institutions, think tanks, policy researchers and practitioners.
- Provide training in advanced quantitative methods, including to mid-career faculty who seek to advance their research to new analytical capabilities.

Measure of excellence: Proposed areas of growth in the QC would advance the state of quantitative scholarship in the social sciences at UVA from excellence to eminence. These investments would support research-active faculty from departments already active in the QC (e.g., Politics, Sociology, Economics, and History) and provide opportunities for expanded collaborations across divisions and schools. Data from Academic Analytics and the Sponsored Programs dashboard indicate prestige and high levels of research activity from A&S departments engaging in quantitative research methods.

Sciences

Excellence in A&S's science departments has been recognized by UVA's pan-university Grand Challenges initiatives. These include investment to develop Neuroscience, Catalysis, Environmental Resilience, Precision Health, and Digital Youth Development. Through hires, these initiatives have created A&S expertise that is a key part of university strength.

Areas where A&S is a hub of excellence include a proposal centered in the Astronomy department, the Interconnected Universe Initiative (IUI), which would establish a research center focused on understanding the cosmic ecosystem, encompassing the origins and life cycles of galaxies, stars, and the universe. This interdisciplinary effort to develop a deeper understanding of the cosmic ecosystem, its interconnected nature, and the multitude of events that led to the emergence of Earth as a habitable planet brings together experts in the disciplines of astronomy, physics, chemistry, and environmental sciences. UVA strengths combined with the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) in Charlottesville, create an opportunity to develop eminence. The IUI proposal includes fellowships for scholars, undergraduate research experiences, interdisciplinary workshops, public outreach initiatives, and a visiting scholar program.

The Center for Integrative and Adaptive Life Science, centered in the Biology Department, builds upon research excellence recognized with the receipt of a highly competitive NSF graduate training grant. This initiative seeks to advance interdisciplinary research into how the environment influences the translation of genes through development into the adult form, aging and disease, in a world where environments are dominated by human change. This center will build upon latent strength across departments and increase collaboration across the life sciences.

The Interconnected Universe

The Interconnected Universe Initiative, centered in UVA's Department of Astronomy, reflects a transformative shift toward greater interdisciplinary collaboration in 21st-century astronomy. With recent faculty hires specializing in diverse areas such as exoplanet weather, galaxy assembly, and stellar evolution, coupled with advancements in telescope technology, and supercomputing capabilities, the department is poised to make significant strides in understanding the cosmic ecosystem. Recognizing the interconnectedness of phenomena across various scales in the universe, the initiative aims to address fundamental questions spanning cosmology, astrophysics, astrochemistry, and astrobiology.

Central to the initiative is the establishment of a vibrant research center focused on the origins of the cosmic ecosystem and the emergence of Earth as a habitable planet. This endeavor necessitates expertise from astronomy, physics, chemistry, and environmental sciences ranging from macroscopic phenomena such as galaxy clusters to molecular interactions shaping planetary formation. Leveraging UVA's leadership in these disciplines and its collaborative culture, the initiative seeks to foster interdisciplinary research through a range of activities, including graduate fellowships, undergraduate research experiences, interdisciplinary postdoctoral fellowships, visiting scholar programs, thematic workshops, and artist-in-residence programs.

An example of the unique interdisciplinary research supported through this initiative is:

Conditions for Habitable Planet Formation: The journey to build a planet begins with interstellar dust grains smaller than a human hair. With over 5,000 confirmed planets, this process is robust, but there are many unsolved questions, including the typical mass distribution in planets and what kinds of materials planets are made of (e.g., fractional amount of water and organic material). Bringing together the expertise in Astronomy, Chemistry, Materials Science, Data Science, and NRAO to derive techniques and apply them to observations on powerful telescopes will enable discovery of potential planetary material. This material may unlock how and if habitable planets are common or uncommon in our galaxy.

Measure of excellence: The Astronomy Department is in the 82nd percentile nationally in terms of its Scholarly Research Index score, and its research could be strengthened through collaborations with other A&S scientists (e.g., the Chemistry and Environmental Sciences rank in the 91st and 89th percentiles, respectively). Opportunities to explore the Interconnected Universe are expected to attract collaborations with researchers from Physics, Statistics, Computer Science, Materials Science, and Data Science.

Center for Integrative and Adaptive Life Science

The evolving landscape of life on Earth, shaped by human activity, underscores the urgent need to understand how organisms adapt to environmental changes. Recognizing this imperative, the proposal seeks to establish the Center for Integrative and Adaptive Life Science within A&S. This interdisciplinary center aims to investigate the intricate relationships between genotype, phenotype, and the environment, leveraging A&S' existing strengths and fostering collaboration across departments.

Phenotype - the observable characteristics of an organism - results from the interplay between genes and environmental factors. Understanding this complex interaction is paramount, given its implications for ecological resilience, human health, and food security. The proposed center will advance fundamental knowledge by expanding research programs focused on the mechanisms underlying the role of the environment in shaping behavior, development, homeostasis, and disease. Through interdisciplinary collaborations, researchers will explore how organisms adapt to changing environments, shedding light on both normal and pathological phenotypes.

Across A&S, multiple science departments, including Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Sciences and Psychology, have research interests at the genotype-phenotype-environment nexus. The Center builds on this interdisciplinary strength while leveraging the University's continuing investments in the Grand Challenges of Precision Health, Neuroscience, and Environmental Resilience. The Center further capitalizes on A&S' three nationally recognized field stations, whose shared focus involves understanding the environmental context of phenotypes. Finally, the establishment of the Center for Integrative and Adaptive Life Science aligns with current funding priorities and positions A&S as a competitive player for federal support.

The center's efforts will be multifaceted, encompassing research, training, and outreach initiatives. It will support the development of new research programs that integrate across disciplines, fostering scientific expertise and innovation. Graduate fellowships will provide students with opportunities to conduct interdisciplinary research and participate in translational internships, while small grants will empower trainees to pursue independent projects. Additionally, the center will engage in effective communication and outreach activities to promote scientific literacy and public understanding of integrative life science research.

Measure of excellence: Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, and Psychology each earn hundreds of thousands of research dollars per year from diverse sources. The Scholarly Research Index score for each department recognizes them nationally in the 80th percentile or higher, according to Academic Analytics. In particular, this initiative brings together research areas within each department that have strong national reputations. Investment in the Center for Integrative and Adaptive Life Science might increase Arts and Sciences' research standing further among universities who excel in this area – AAU institutions.

Measuring Excellence in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

To determine what contributes to perceptions of excellence, the strategic planning leadership team asked stakeholders about metrics that A&S faculty value in their respective disciplines. Unsurprisingly, the committee found that excellence in scholarly inquiry is measured differently in each discipline. Our approach to measure the current standing of research in A&S and thoughts on how targeted investments might impact that standing therefore would need to include a variety of metrics. These include quantitative (i.e., datasets) and qualitative (i.e., examination of departmental peer evaluation rubrics, communications with faculty) sources.

Faculty in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences all value the production of high-quality work that impacts society and academia but are guided by distinct epistemologies and facing different constraints. Professors serve as experts in their field and may have gained some knowledge of other fields over the course of their career, but few feel comfortable speaking on what programs at our institution stand out as being our strongest. In divisional focus groups faculty also expressed differences in what strategy might guide investment in A&S research, scholarship, and creative activity. Receiving this feedback affirmed the committee's commitment to their charge of recommending improvements that would support all faculty while also identifying areas of excellence that might thrive and advance A&S' research standing through targeted investment.

Peer institutions and areas of research excellence in the arts and sciences at UVA were determined in part through discussion and a survey of department chairs. A Qualtrics survey, filled out by more than a third of chairs, asked questions related to potential investments, identifying peer institutions, and perceived areas of strength in UVA's research, scholarship, and creative activity. Results indicated that most identified peers were public AAU institutions (in addition to a few private AAUs and other R1 universities with very high research activity), and a number of thematic areas in which A&S excels were identified.

We built upon these initial results through a survey and follow-up town halls. All A&S faculty with responsibilities in research, scholarship, or creative activity, a total of more than 600, were invited to complete the survey assessing areas of research opportunity and potential investments. 51.2% of faculty completed the survey. A data analyst coded qualitative, open-ended responses and this, combined with insight gleaned from quantitative survey data, was presented to faculty in three divisional town halls. There, faculty provided feedback on ideas and requested additional opportunities for discussion, leading to further meetings in each division, followed by less formal engagement (e.g., committee meetings, conversations and emails with faculty).

We also undertook data-driven comparisons across departments and other institutions of higher education using information from Academic Analytics and UVA's Sponsored Programs Dashboard. Academic Analytics collects data on faculty research across U.S. colleges and

universities including the publication of articles, books, chapters, and conference proceedings, citations, awards, grant dollars earned, and more. Academic Analytics weighs these metrics differently in each discipline, informed by the values and academic traditions of each field, to create a Scholarly Research Index (SRI) score. When considering these measures, leaders in A&S acknowledge that SRI scores fail to capture important successes in the visual and performing arts. Faculty in the visual and performing arts were consulted by members of the committee for additional metrics. UVA's Sponsored Programs Dashboard was used to analyze grant proposal and awards activities for A&S departments.

As researchers, scholars, and artists, members of the committee would like to emphasize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to achieving or demonstrating excellence. Data sources available to A&S should be considered alongside acknowledgements of the data's limitations. Productivity related to research, scholarship, and creative activity is impacted by many factors including the challenges that accompany an environment with limited resources, such as competing demands on faculty's time to engage in high-quality research, teaching, and service.