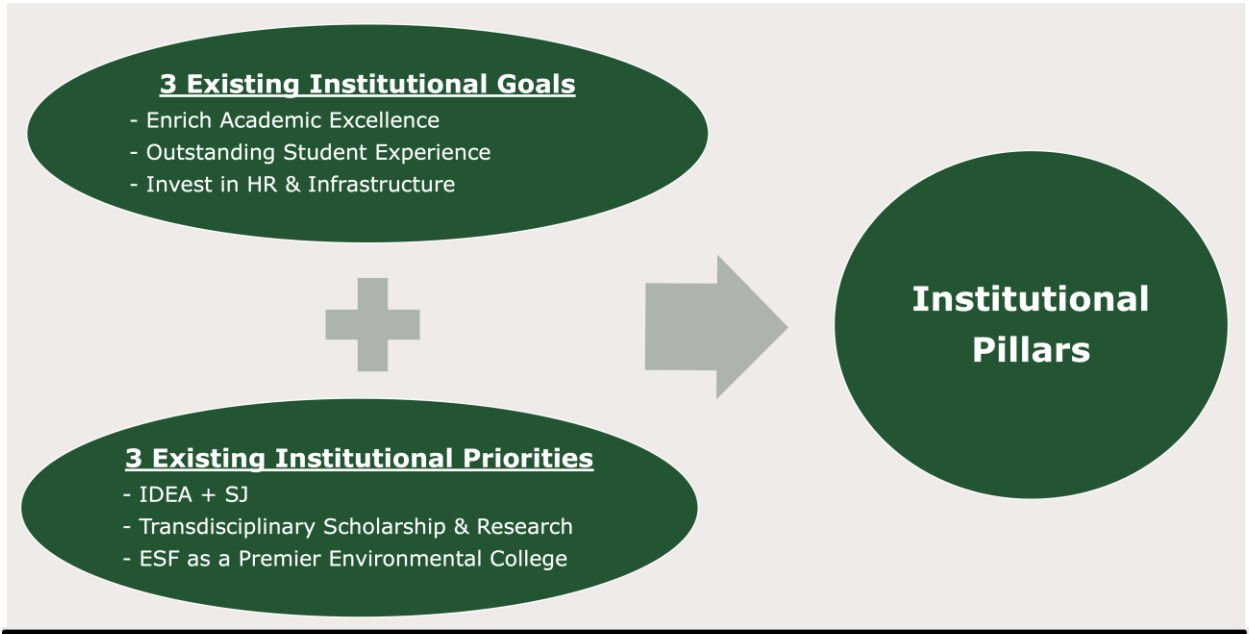
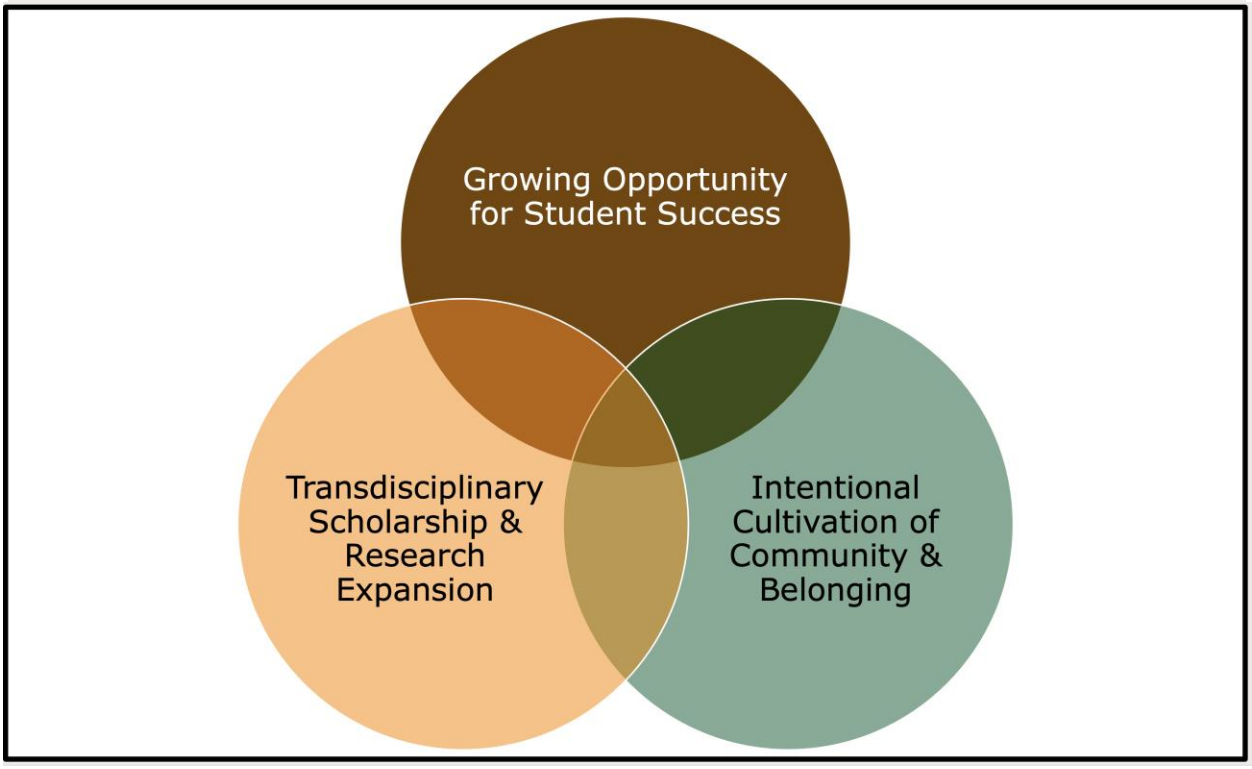
SUNY ESF STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028

Official Version 04/19/2023

SUNY ESF Strategic Plan Conceptual Model

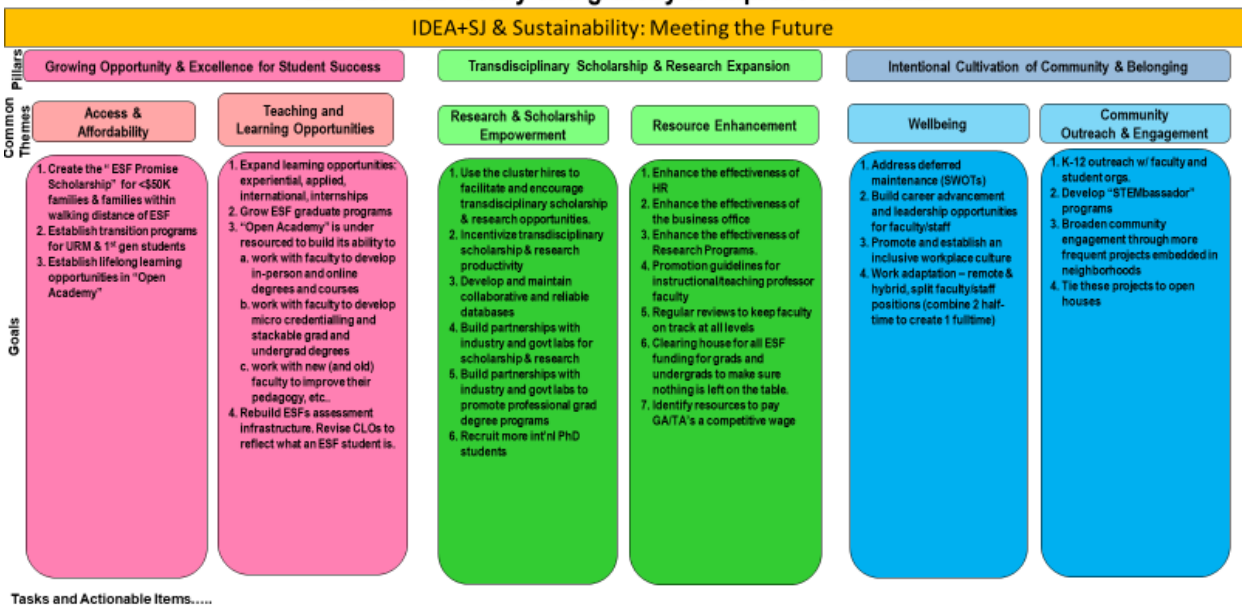




SUNY ESF 2023-28 Strategic Plan Pillars

SUNY ESF Strategic Plan Graphic

The mission of ESF is to educate future environmental leaders of all backgrounds, advance knowledge and skills necessary to promote scholarship and stewardship of the natural to designed environments, and act both locally and globally to improve our world.



Preamble

SUNY ESF is a primarily residential Carnegie Doctoral/Research university characterized by a STEM focus and a high proportion of undergraduate students and transfers. It is the only Carnegie Doctoral/Research university that is classified as "small." Fall 2022 Undergraduate enrollment stood at 1,638 and graduate enrollment was 384. In addition, ESF enrolls approximately 650 non-matriculated students each year, primarily in the "ESF in the High School" program, which is housed in the ESF Open Academy.

ESF performs extremely well in many national rankings focused upon academic and sustainability programs, as well as affordability and student services. A sample of these rankings include, but are not limited to the following:

- #1 Best Public School for Making an Impact (The Princeton Review)
- #1 Sustainability Curriculum (Sustainable Campus Index, AASHE)
- #1 Best Bachelor's Degree Program in Forestry (study.com)
- #3 Top Green College (The Princeton Review)
- #9 Top 20 Best Public Schools for Financial Aid (The Princeton Review)
- #16 in 2023 Best Colleges in New York (highest of all 64 SUNY campuses) (NICHE)
- 34 ESF scientists are among the world's top 2% most cited in their respective fields (Standard University Study)

ESF has undertaken many strategic planning exercises over a period of decades. These planning efforts articulated an updated set of college-wide goals. ESF's mission and associated goals were affirmed or refreshed periodically until 2018 when the process was interrupted by a variety of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic. With new leadership, ESF revisited its mission and goals, which triggered the current strategic planning process.

This strategic plan is based on three pillars – (a) Growing Opportunity and Excellence for Student Success, (b) Transdisciplinary Scholarship and Research Expansion, and (c) Intentional Cultivation of Community and Belonging. These pillars emerged from the 3 existing institutional goals, discussions in academic units, faculty, staff, and student focus groups; and SWOT analyses completed by non-academic units on the Syracuse and satellite campuses.

The three pillars are viewed through the lens of three overarching concepts that are meant to pervade every goal and action included within this plan: 1) inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and social justice, 2) sustainability teaching, scholarship, research and operational action and, 3) financial stability and responsibility.

The strategic planning process provides the opportunity to address 21st-century grand challenges, which inherently require interdisciplinary efforts and scholarship, often combining physical and social science, and policy creation/implementation. ESF is uniquely equipped to tackle the grand challenges of climate change, water scarcity, renewable energy, resource wastefulness, social and environmental justice, biodiversity loss and

habitat destruction, Big Data proliferation in every field, sustainability of the designed to natural environments, and conservation. We will use this moment to realign academic and non-academic units, engage with emerging academic and operational opportunities, and hire new faculty clusters focused on these issues to move the institution into a new and exciting future.

Proposed New Mission Statement

The old mission statement of

> *The Mission of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry is to advance knowledge and skills and to promote the leadership necessary for the stewardship of both the natural and designed environments.*

was approved by the College community and the Board of Trustees (BOT) in 2001/2002 and was reaffirmed periodically since that time. The current strategic planning process generated a new mission statement. The strategic planning steering committee used a Delphi process to develop 13 different versions of the mission statement. These mission statements were then ranked by the committee and the top four (4) were selected. A Qualtrics survey was then developed that included these mission statements and the existing mission statement. A link to the survey was emailed to the campus community of administrators, faculty, staff, and students (all mission statement options were presented in a randomized order to respondents) to obtain their ranked order preference. Of the candidate mission statements, the following ranked the highest and represents ESF's proposed mission statement:

> *The mission of ESF is to educate future environmental leaders of all backgrounds, advance knowledge, and skills necessary to promote scholarship and stewardship of the natural to designed environments, and act both locally and globally to improve our world.*

The provost presented the results to the Executive Cabinet on February 14, 2023, and then to the rest of the campus community at an Academic Governance monthly meeting on February 21, 2023. The new mission statement was endorsed by majority vote at the Academic Governance (AG) meeting on May 3, 2023.

Vision Statement

> *A Better World through Environmental Discovery.*

ESF aims to develop a campus culture that enables the aspirations expressed in the mission statement to be achieved. The university aspires to build a cohesive community of individuals working synergistically to serve the institution's academic mission, that of transforming students and society through instructional, scholarly, entrepreneurial, and engagement activities. Importantly, ESF also seeks to serve as a university of action, where students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and visitors "practice what we teach" and operationalize sustainability in daily activities and decisions. Finally, ESF aims to assist

other individuals and institutions in embodying these ESF principles of community cohesion and trust, academic excellence rooted in STEM coursework, research, and adherence to sustainability principles.

This commitment will provide the framework that will enable ESF to address the grand global challenges confronting humanity today, and to raise the national and international prominence of the institution. Our highest aspiration is to become wholly invested, individually and collectively, in satisfying these duties.

The true impacts of ESF are defined by the contributions of our faculty, students, staff, and alumni to their respective fields/areas of expertise and to the broader society. ESF is positioned to capitalize on recent transformative investments in infrastructure and on the ever increasing international, national, and state focus on climate change action and sustainability planning/implementation. Looking forward, it is also critical that ESF remain agile and able to meaningfully respond to the ever-changing needs of the societal, educational, and scientific landscapes.

Overarching Concepts: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) & Social Justice (SJ) & Sustainability – Meeting the Future

The concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, access, social justice and sustainability have been included within, and in some cases have been the guiding force behind, previous strategic planning efforts. ESF emphatically commits to centering these principles within this most recent strategic planning effort and more importantly, has named them as "overarching concepts" that are expected to be ever present throughout the implementation phase of this plan. Members of the campus community assigned to implementing each goal and associated actions discussed in the following pages of this planning document will include these overarching concepts during the earliest planning stages of a project, through to its conclusion. This will ensure that the narrative included within this strategic document is not performative in nature, but instead will lead to concrete action and associated cultural changes at the institution.

The concepts of IDEA, SJ, and Sustainability are included within many of the themes, goals, and actions outlined in the following sections. However, as stated above, even if these concepts are not explicitly detailed in a specific goal or action, project implementors are expected to identify and act upon ways to include them to the greatest extent possible.

ESF recognizes that the term "sustainability" encompasses environmental, economic, and social components and does not seek to simply reduce the harm done to these areas, but instead works to achieve net positive outcomes for the planet and all beings that call it home. The institution seeks to provide unique and impactful teaching, scholarship, research, engagement, and action-oriented programs that empower members of the campus community to take individual actions to spark necessary change to combat climate change and social injustice, but more importantly it seeks to create the ability to create large-scale social change. This system level change is needed so that we may all collectively work to improve our world to meet the needs of current and future generations.

Sustainability at ESF may be simply defined as "practicing what we teach". This document reaffirms the university's commitment to operationalizing sustainability across all campus operations and integrating this progress in coursework to provide students with tangible examples of action-based sustainability that move beyond theory and policy creation.

PILLARS, THEMES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS

The rest of the document will lay out the action items associated with the goals included in each theme and pillar. This strategic plan assumes a five (5) year implementation horizon. The action items provided below are strategic in that they identify results ESF aims to achieve over the next 5 years. The classic elements of objectives derived from these action items - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound - will not be included in the strategic plan at this time. These will be part of an implementation plan developed over the summer of 2023 into the fall of 2023. A component of the implementation plan will be a Gantt chart providing these details and will be developed once all action items are finalized, prioritized and the strategic plan is adopted. The Gantt chart will also include the names and/or titles of the individuals responsible for completing each action item. The intent is to begin implementing some of the action items in the fall of 2023.

PILLAR 1: GROWING OPPORTUNITY & EXCELLENCE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

THEME 1: ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND ENROLLMENT

Goal 1: Institutionalize enrollment planning

The foundation of a good strategic enrollment plan is a good strategic enrollment planning process, culminating in actions to improve enrollment. Currently ESF needs a planning process, leading to a plan, and implementing the resulting action items.

Expected declines in overall numbers of secondary school graduates combined with "increasing diversification of high school graduates adds more weight to the imperative for postsecondary education to better support students who have traditionally been underserved and address systemic inequities." (WICHE, Knocking at the College Door/December 2020)

Actions: Examine enrollment planning

- Create a strategic enrollment plan for Fall 2024-2028, including an emphasis on recruitment of students from diverse backgrounds and those who consider environmental sustainability in their college enrollment decisions (*plan development to be underway by Summer 2023*).
- Develop targets and strategies for all enrollment audiences – new undergraduate and graduate students, continuing undergraduate and graduate students, online, and specific target audiences such as underrepresented minorities, transfers, and international students.
- Include targets and strategies for all academic programs and departments.
- Develop key performance indicators and a timeline for enrollment plan updates and renewal.

Goal 2: Increase undergraduate student enrollment in underrepresented populations

As part of enrollment planning (Goal 1), ESF commits to increasing enrollment in targeted populations that exhibit growth opportunities. These efforts will increase student access to ESF while also expanding our student body diversity.

Actions: Develop strategies to increase enrollment

- Develop and implement an international student recruitment plan to increase new international enrollment by 10% by Fall 2025.
- Examine credit transfer policies and practices to ensure ESF awards credit in an equitable manner to support student transition and success.
- Enhance ESF in the High School as an effective pathway to enrollment at ESF; support growing ESF enrollment coming out of ESF in the HS by 10% by Fall 2024.
- Increase enrollments coming out of SCSD (by 10% by Fall 2025).
- Create more engaging communications for prospective transfer students.
- Increase visibility at community colleges and trade schools.
- Strengthen partnerships with local and regional organizations and community groups including those in "fence line communities" where potential students are disproportionately impacted by heavily polluting industries.
- Highlight EOP, CSTEP, and LSAMP stories on website, social media, and other communication channels.
- Fully utilize Slate CRM.

Goal 3: Enhance graduate student community

Our graduate students are an essential part of the success of ESF whether it be through scholarship, research or teaching. Increasing our support for this community will improve the graduate student experience at ESF while also making ESF a competitive destination for graduate students. Enhancing our strategic recruitment efforts of graduate students will also help in both diversifying and strengthening our entire university community.

Actions: Expand opportunities for graduate students

- Increase graduate student support systems, including mentoring, stipends, showcasing research at conferences, and career preparation.
- Assess staffing levels for necessary graduate student recruitment and support services.
- Provide opportunities for graduate students to be included throughout institutional planning.
- Increase professional development opportunities for graduate assistants.
- Increase graduate student recruitment efforts to grow the MPS degree and exceed the minimum requirement of 20 PhDs graduating per year to maintain R2 status.
- Reduce barriers to graduate student success.
- Streamline onboarding process for graduate student employees by producing more informative orientation programs, providing career-development mentoring opportunities, and minimizing paperwork requirements.

Goal 4: Increase access and affordability for all students

For students to enroll and complete a degree at ESF, they must be able to afford it. Financial concerns can be a barrier to enrolling at ESF. Students of color, students of limited economic means, and students who are the first in their family to attend college experience lower rates of postsecondary access and attainment than their peers.

Actions: Examine concerns of affordability

- Develop a scholarship and financial aid strategy that aligns with enrollment expectations and institutional priorities.
- Collect, compile, and analyze data in support for strategy creation.
- Develop scholarship/financial aid strategy specific to international students.
- Assess timeliness of awards and disbursement to best meet the needs of students.

Goal 5: Improve retention and time-to-degree rates

Learning more about the factors that affect student persistence. Exploring ways and means of improving retention can help ESF avoid the costs associated with student attrition and create better outcomes for ESF students. The current landscape of higher education requires ESF to meet the needs of a changing student population with competing priorities.

Actions: Improve retention

- Develop achievable retention and time-to-degree goals for undergraduates and graduate students (such as "*Improve first to second year undergraduate retention rate from 79% to 85% by Fall 2028*").
- Conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis to create an improved understanding of student success at ESF including assessing efforts to support and outcomes of sub-populations of students including undergraduate, graduate, transfer, URM, etc.
- Create a welcoming environment for students of all backgrounds which encourages engagement and mitigates barriers.
- Create an early alert system for struggling students using the Anthology 'Beacon' platform (dovetails with the Engage and Blackboard platforms already in place).
- Move forward with required mid-term grades.
- Assess barriers to success within the first-year academic experience.
- Engage community resources and family members.
- Develop a communication plan for parents/families of ESF students.
- Create engaging web content for parents/families.
- Develop and implement a seminar class designed for family members of first-year students.

<u>THEME 2:</u> TEACHING AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Goal 1: Expand relevance and accessibility of an ESF education to a wider range of learners

The fastest growing sector in higher education is the non-traditional learner, often older than the typical traditional student. This cohort is likely to be employed, and likely to have family responsibilities which prevent individuals from committing to 4-year degrees. Short-term

engagements with ESF in the form of noncredit, low credit, certificate and/or microcredential programs are preferred. The Open Academy is well suited to address the needs of this growing group of lifelong learners. Expanding program flexibility and developing new program options and stackable certificates can increase enrollment and incentivize completion of degree programs while helping students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their chosen fields quickly and efficiently. Additionally, developing programs for non-traditional students and enhancing career preparation programs through curriculum integration can help learners gain practical skills and experience that are directly applicable to their future careers, making them more attractive to employers and increasing their chances of success in the workforce. The goal of these efforts is to make higher education more relevant and useful for learners, helping them achieve their personal and professional goals.

Actions: Expand program flexibility to support diverse audiences

- Identify the needs of the target audiences
- Assess what administrative infrastructure and criteria would be needed to evaluate and provide college credit for work and professional experience.
- Create credentialling opportunities for lifelong learners; working professionals; professionals looking to upskilling/reskilling; academic credit for work.
- Analyze existing programs for opportunities to increase flexibility.
- Develop new program options
- Provide advising and support services
- Leverage technology
- Market the programs

Actions: Enhance career preparation programs through curricular integration

- Develop industry-specific courses
- Offer professional development opportunities
- Leverage ESF's campus as a living lab to showcase real-world application of ESF education
- Incorporate career services throughout curriculum
- Provide mentoring and networking opportunities
- Utilize technology throughout curriculum
- Continuously assess and update curriculum

Goal 2: Develop new programs in high-demand areas to meet industry, governmental, non-governmental, and non-profit workforce needs

Programs in high-demand areas are designed to provide relevant training directly applicable to the workforce. This can increase the employability of students and make them more attractive to potential employers which in turn can lead to stronger relationships with local employers and increase the likelihood of graduates finding employment in the area. ESF is poised to be a major player in developing the workforce needed in industries and organizations related to NYS's Climate Act, including climate, clean energy, and sustainability careers. Programs in high-demand areas can generate revenue for ESF.

Actions: Develop offerings for recognized credentials and professional development opportunities to produce career ready graduates

- Expand the computational science opportunities available to ESF students to complement the excellent education they are receiving in observational and experimental science
- Research recognized credentials
- Develop partnerships with employers
- Design programs around industry, governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, and workforce needs
- Analyze the feasibility of hiring faculty with specific industry and desired related teaching and scholarship experience
- Market and promote programs
- Evaluate and adjust programs

Actions: Develop new low-credit or noncredit options to attract new enrollment and build pathways to degree programs

- Identify high-demand areas
- Conduct market research
- Develop partnerships
- Develop new program options
- Market and promote programs
- Evaluate and adjust programs

Goal 3: Create a community of faculty with diverse pedagogies who are skilled teaching in multiple modalities

The creation of a community of faculty teaching with diverse pedagogies and modalities can enhance collaboration, inclusivity, innovation, and ongoing professional development leading to improved student learning outcomes and equal opportunities for academic and professional success. Such a community promotes collaboration and the sharing of best practices leading to enhanced teaching strategies and improved learning experience for students. Additionally, a community of faculty teaching with diverse pedagogies and modalities increases access and inclusivity by reaching a wider range of students with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and preferences. Diverse pedagogies and modalities can foster innovation and ongoing professional development, leading to the development of novel approaches to education and improved learning experience for students while keeping faculty members up to date on the latest trends and best practices in education.

Actions: Define and communicate the vision and values of the community regarding teaching and learning

- Create a task force to define ESFs vision for teaching and learning
- Conduct research and scholarship on teaching and learning to optimize the modalities most relevant to the changing demographics of ESF learners
- Create a task force to develop guiding principles for teaching and learning at ESF
- Communicate ESFs vision and values with respect to teaching and learning with faculty, graduate students, staff, and students
- Implement strategies to improve teaching and learning at ESF.

- Monitor progress and make adjustments

Actions: Establish regular opportunities and communication channels to encourage a culture of sharing and collaboration

- Establish a clear communication strategy
- Use multiple communication channels
- Create regular opportunities for interaction
- Promote cross-functional collaboration
- Use technology to enhance communication
- Encourage feedback and transparency

Actions: Recognize and celebrate diversity in teaching and learning

- Recruit and retain diverse faculty and staff
- Offer inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility training to all faculty, students, and staff.
- Incorporate diverse perspectives into the curriculum
- Celebrate cultural events and traditions
- Foster a culture of respect and inclusivity

Goal 4: Increase global fluency through expanded opportunities

Expanding global scholarship opportunities can result in improved student learning and outcomes, increased institutional visibility and reputation, and greater diversity and inclusion. These opportunities, such as study abroad programs, international internships, and language immersion programs can enhance students' academic and personal growth by broadening their perspectives and deepening their understanding of different cultures, which can translate into improved critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. Participating in such programs can also improve students' career readiness by providing them with skills and knowledge that are highly valued by employers in today's global marketplace. Also, offering innovative and high-quality global fluency programs can help colleges and universities build a strong brand and position themselves as global education leaders. Expanding these opportunities can also attract a more diverse student body and promote greater inclusion on campus, fostering a welcoming and inclusive campus culture and providing opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to learn from each other and develop cross-cultural competencies. Global programs also expose student populations to diverse perspectives and lived experiences regarding climate change impacts and solutions. These perspectives are critically important to ESF, being that it is a premier environmental institution.

Actions: Integrate global learning into the curriculum

- Embed education abroad opportunities into each departmental curriculum. This should include a diversity of options such as semester/summer programs, research, and/or short-term international courses.
- Identify institutional-level and departmental-level global learning outcomes.
- Incorporate global perspectives at both the individual course level as well as at the program level.

- Develop globally themed courses that specifically aim to increase global competence/fluency.
- Provide opportunities for faculty development in global learning pedagogies. Encourage interdisciplinary and innovative approaches.

Actions*: *Increase access to education abroad

- Develop institutional and department-level study abroad participation goals (such as 20% of student body; or 30% of ERE students) and set forth plan to achieve. Goal development should consider students and identities that historically have had limited education abroad participation.
- Increase education abroad funding opportunities such as scholarships, stipends, awards, discounts, and other financial resources for students.
- Evaluate and assess existing study abroad programs, policies, and procedures looking for gaps or other barriers to access (such as curriculum challenges, financial barriers, or over-excessive options).
- Develop new study abroad programs and/or policies as needed to meet identified gaps and barriers.
- Embed sustainable practices throughout education abroad experience.
- Provide high-quality and equitable advising for students at all levels of the education abroad experience (program searching, program application, pre-departure, during program, re-entry).

Actions: Increase global-focused on-campus programs

- Expand COIL activities and increase classroom collaboration with international organizations.
- Expand extra-curricular international opportunities such as cultural programs and globally focused clubs and organizations.
- Support faculty in implementation of global pedagogies through professional development opportunities and other resources.
- Assess and develop virtual exchange opportunities.
- Expand international student support services and programming.

Goal 5: Develop customized student success supports

Creating customized, equitable, and effective student success supports can lead to improved academic performance, increased retention rates, and better alignment with student needs. These supports will be tailored to meet the unique needs of individual students, and will include interventions to address non-academic factors, such as mental health or family issues, to improve students' overall well-being and create a more supportive learning environment. Customized support will also help create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, particularly for underrepresented students, by reducing the barriers they face and improving their outcomes.

Actions: Develop effective and high-quality faculty advising

- Conduct a comprehensive faculty advising needs assessment survey
- Develop and implement an academic advisor training program
- Align retention and time-to-degree goals to academic advising framework.

Actions: Develop institutional systems to support student needs

- Conduct an institutional student academic support needs assessment survey
- Develop and implement a Student Success Management System
- Gather and analyze data on student success
- Develop systems to provide these data and analyses to inform academic advisors
- Improve comprehensive academic advising support services
- Improve comprehensive student academic support services

Goal 6: Provide students with opportunities to develop and apply their skills and knowledge in experiential settings

Experiential, applied, hands-on field, and project-based learning, as well as extracurricular experiences such as internships, leadership opportunities and participation in clubs, can provide students with practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking skills that are highly valued in many career pathways. By reinforcing and expanding these types of learning experiences, ESF can help students become more well-rounded and competitive in the job market.

Actions: Reinforce and expand immersive experiential, applied, hands-on field, and project-based learning

- Expand study abroad programs by developing partnerships with institutions in climate-water- and food-security-challenged parts of the world
- Partnerships with international organizations
- Expand service-learning opportunities
- Expand applied, hands-on field, and project-based learning
- Encourage collaboration with international students
- Provide professional development opportunities for experiential, applied, hands-on field, and project-based learning

Actions*: *Reinforce ESF hallmark extra-curricular experiences

- Offer recognition and awards
- Involve faculty and staff
- Encourage student leadership
- Promote collaboration

Actions: Formalize partnerships between academic units and the Office of Sustainability to create a more robust utilization of campus as a living laboratory

- Co-develop student projects informed by campus data and processes to analyze campus operations and suggest improvements
- Mutually inform respective areas of expertise and operation (ex: Office of Sustainability guest lectures in classes or faculty member engagement in sustainability program creation and implementation)

PILLAR 2: TRANSDISCIPLINARY SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH EXPANSION

THEME 1: RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EMPOWERMENT

Goal 1: Increase effectiveness of faculty research time

Increasing scholarly activities given demands on faculty time indicates a growing need to assess and improve efficiency of administrative processes with a focus on the end user. Given increased administrative requirements limiting time to conduct science and related scholarly activities, the following action items are proposed to make ESF a workplace that supports research endeavors and discovery among our faculty, students, staff and administrators.

Actions*: *Assess instructional and research support staff needs

- Conduct a needs assessment of college-wide instructional and research support requirements
- Given the identified needs or gaps, conduct a cost-benefit analysis of additional instructional and research support staff.
- Develop a cost recovery program for managing shared research labs
- Develop external funding sources for off-campus research labs and regional campuses

***Actions*: *Develop a system for a teaching release for large research proposals and effort*s**

- Develop a process to apply for a "teaching release" for funded faculty research which includes a cost-benefit analysis of covering the teaching that was released.
- Develop a process for research intensive faculty to apply for research assistants from their respective departmental teaching/research assistant pools.

Actions*: *Streamline faculty support across offices (travel, ORP, HR, facilities)

- Facilitate inter-unit cooperation of major business systems
- Develop information flow processes that cross units (e.g., RF, State, HR, Travel, Business Office, Procurement, Dept's)
- Develop faculty training and improved data interfaces to facilitate business transactions

Actions*: *Analyze the potential to recruit more post-docs to assist in increasing research productivity and improving lab management

- Increase budgeting for post-docs into research proposals
- Develop institutional systems to improve the success of post-docs
- Increase ESF visibility as a distinguished post-doctoral mentoring destination

Goal 2: Grant-making Success and Research Funding Expansion

Research expansion in an essential strategic mechanism that fulfills: i) our societal obligation to train new leaders and provide solutions to environmental challenges, ii) our continuous strive to improve ESF's mission through innovative, state-of-the-art education, iii) our

financial independence by improving our reputation that in turn assists further a) to establish partnerships with government, foundations and industry, b) to improve recruitment of out-of-state undergraduate students, and c) to increase research activities.

Actions*: *Assist faculty research and proposal development

- Integrate department administrative and research foundation staff to assist faculty research development and management
- Assign and develop ORP connections with faculty at department level
- Create a library of proposal templates and examples

Actions*: *Support faculty efforts with research development

- Provide early-career faculty with proposal mentoring and research concierge services
- Facilitate large institutional and center-scale proposals with multiple investigators
- Develop funding sources to support travel
- Create opportunities for faculty to engage with funding program officers
- Facilitate opportunities for faculty to serve on research panels and attend research development meetings with agencies, non-governmental organizations, and corporations
- Help connect faculty to outreach, diversity, and education programs (e.g., master teacher program, LSAMP) for broader impacts

Actions*: *Invest in research incentive programs for faculty

- Continue and expand faculty and departmental research incentive funding, based on indirect cost recovery
- Assess capacity and expand funding as feasible for faculty recruitment start-up packages
- Assess and prioritize various incentive funding mechanisms in the form of small pilot grants, travel support, equipment, lab resources or other needs to launch projects
- Assist faculty in efforts to integrate research and philanthropic development in ESF College Foundation

Goal 3: Redesign and improve graduate student funding processes, with a focus on PhDs

ESF graduate programs face a number of challenges, including low numbers of PhD students, intense competition for good candidates, stipends that are not competitive with peer institutions, and a confusing ad-hoc process of funding students. In addition to low stipend amounts and high fees, graduate students are subject to different State and Research Foundation (RF) hiring processes, insurance plans, and working conditions. Despite a revised GA distribution model that has incentivized PhD recruitment and increased faculty research productivity, there remain several challenges that run counter to the objectives of increasing the recruitment, retention and graduation of PhD students. ESF needs to redesign its PhD funding and recruitment model to target high-quality students, as well as incentivize faculty grant-making to support students on research. Borrowing from current practices in several departments, as well as other SUNY campuses, we recommend a college-wide model that (a)

increases grad student stipends and related benefits and extend to 12 months; (b) streamlines student appointments and administrative processes; and (c) incentivizes faculty in grant-making by matching grad support from research grants with State GA funding.

Actions: Raise graduate student stipends to make them competitive

- Raise the Calendar Year minimum stipend to peer institution levels noting that stipend increases may need to be implemented incrementally, considering limitations on the number of students that can be funded at the target stipend, existing RF award budgets, and need to increase budget stipends in new proposals.
- Cover grad student fees through a combination of waivers or College Foundation funds (for GA positions) and RF research awards (for RPA positions)
- Create a standard multi-year (e.g., 3, 4 or 5 year) package for recruiting graduate students

Actions: Examine making all graduate appointments 12-month positions

- Examine reimbursing non-teaching time (RPA and summer positions) through RF and College Foundation funds
- Survey peer SUNY campus funding models (University Centers, UMU, Poly)
- Assess mechanisms for RF reimbursement to State and impact on award budgets, effort reporting, and other related processes
- Create standard reimbursement procedures with robust data infrastructure
- Streamline student appointment processes through one form

Actions: Consolidate College Foundation funding for student summer support

- Assess donor directed vs. undirected funding requirements to pool funds where possible.
- Set standard award amounts for summer stipends when research funds are not available
- Centralize award decisions in the Graduate School, with input from College Foundation and department chairs and grad committees
- Prioritize CF funding campaigns to support grad students in departments with limited research grant-making capacity, as well as for potential new, high-impact programs such as Global Change Fellowships and research cluster themes

Actions: Create a funding match formula

- Examine the feasibility to provide faculty who commit to support PhD students with extramural research grants with matching state GA positions and tuition waivers
- Implement the model on a departmental level, considering differences in department size, funding opportunities and limitations, and grad recruiting practices

Actions: Coordinate student funding communication process during recruiting

- Coordination between Grad School and department graduate committees on student selection and funding packages
- Develop an efficient Grad School communication for all funding, with one acceptance/funding letter and standard template

- Track faculty funding commitments, student acceptance and retention rates, other metrics as appropriate

<u>THEME 2:</u> RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT

Goal 1: Increase Effective Utilization of Existing Resources

Increasing the effective utilization of existing resources will optimize the use of current resources at ESF to achieve the best possible outcomes. A consistent need expressed throughout the academic department strategic plans and unit SWOT analyses was access to enhanced processes and systems, such as data analytics, communication, and budgeting. By investing in the necessary upgrades and improvements to the existing infrastructure such as aligning the IT system with ESF's mission, creating a meaningful budget process, and improving data quality standards, ESF can make better-informed decisions that will ultimately increase revenue streams, retain more students, and improve employee satisfaction. Additionally, by creating a more secure and reliable cyber infrastructure, ESF can protect valuable resources and ensure that they are available to be effectively utilized.

Actions: Create a meaningful budget process/system for ESF Departments.

- Meet with department chairs and unit heads to identify funding needs.
- Provide education on budgeting and funding access.
- Create a budget that shows where every dollar is going.
- Prioritize and schedule funding for strategic initiatives.

Actions: Enhance data analytics to better understand resource base and uses of resources for future goal setting.

- Improve data governance at ESF.
- Improve data quality standards at ESF.
- Build a data analytics platform to allow the tracking of well-defined Key Performance Indicators that will better support data-informed decision-making.
- Improve the security and privacy of ESF's data resources.

Actions: Realize the potential of campus information systems.

- Improve the reliability, responsiveness, and end-user experience of ESF's Student Information System (SIS).
- Improve the security and privacy of ESF's information systems.

Actions: Increase number of strategic partnership opportunities with SU.

- Renew ESF's 5-year service contract with SU increase strategic partnerships through mutually beneficial opportunities.
- Inform the campus of and encourage more effective/complete use of SU-contracted services.

Actions: Reimagine campus communication systems.

- Complete migration of campus email system to the Microsoft cloud.

- Partner with SUNY on a system-wide Unified Communications system.
- Realize the potential of 'Engage' and other Anthology tools currently in place or in progress.
- Consolidate emergency communication systems.

Action: Improve ESF's cyber infrastructure.

- Improve the security, performance, and reliability of ESF's network infrastructure.

Actions: Increase job satisfaction and employee retention by enhancing effectiveness of Human Resource systems/processes.

- Create promotion guidelines for instructional/teaching professor faculty.
- Institute regular performance review of faculty and staff at all levels.

Action: Establish a strategy for IT transformation at ESF.

- Align IT with ESF's mission through stronger ties to Academic Governance and student government.

Goal 2: Increase Revenue Streams

ESF's structural budget deficit results from the inability to set tuition combined with plummeting state dollars to compensate for heavily subsidized tuition. ESF does not have a spending problem. Many offices are one-person deep, and budgets have already been cut to the bone. ESF needs to generate more revenue to sustainably support its operations and maintain quality services. To achieve this goal, the college aims to stabilize and increase enrollment for new and existing on-campus and online programs, as well as increase research cost recovery and philanthropic support. Additional opportunities for revenue generation exist through the creation of an Auxiliary Services Corporation for related-business enterprises and increased lobbying efforts for legislative funding items and tuition support. By implementing these strategies, the college aims to generate new revenue streams to support its operations, increase financial stability, and maintain its position as a leading institution in higher education.

Actions: Expand revenue-generating Masters of Professional Studies type programs

- Enhance marking efforts of online undergraduate and graduate courses and degree programs; for example, an online MPS.
- Conduct a market analysis of popular programs in areas of ESF strengths, and regional opportunities (e.g., Micron).
- Target international students and on-line offerings
- Design modular programs with stackable certificates and micro-credentials
- Initiate new programs through Grad School and Open Academy

Action: Increase philanthropic support for public-facing research, students, and academic programs.

- Plan and implement a philanthropic fundraising campaign with a working goal range of 30 to 40 million dollars.

Actions: Create an Auxiliary Services Corporation for related-business enterprises.

- Finalize creation of Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC).
- Identify start-up funding to support the new ASC activities.
- Support ESF-operated foodservice.
- Consider other revenue producing business operations (e.g., student transportation).

Actions: Create new micro-credential and certificate programs to attract non-traditional students.

- Increase enrollment of online students
- Create new online courses and programs.
- New course creation to support micro-credentials and certificates.
- State Education Department approval of new micro-credentials and certificates.
- Marketing and enrollment efforts.

Action: Increase lobbying efforts for legislative funding items and tuition support.

- Increase lobbying efforts for legislative funding items and tuition support.

Action: Increase research cost recovery.

- Increase the share of Federal and industry sponsor awards, which have higher indirect cost rates than most state and foundation research awards
- Renegotiate indirect rates with agencies such as the NYSDEC when opportunities arise, e.g., when renewing MOUs
- Increase use of recharge facilities such as A&TS, and market to outside users (with higher external use charge rates)
- Recalculate facilities and services (F&S) rates to include all costs (e.g., salaries, facilities, equipment cost, maintenance and depreciation.

PILLAR 3: INTENTIONAL CULTIVATION OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

THEME 1: WELLBEING

Goal 1: Make the ESF campus a welcoming environment for all

The long-term success of the campus requires that ESF creates a place of both learning and employment that is welcoming to people from all backgrounds and experiences.

Action: Create an accessible campus

- Create a built environment that ensures all members of the campus community feel valued and included
- Ensure communication policies and practices support inclusion and accessibility
- Foster a culture that enables all to have a voice

Action: Actively engage the entire campus community in operationalizing sustainability

- Fund and implement sustainability-related guiding documents and plans
- Develop a campus culture deeply rooted in sustainability action
- Provide technical and implementation assistance for new and ongoing sustainability programs

Goal 2: Enhance the ESF student experience

Strengthening the experience of graduate and undergraduate students on the ESF campus is critical to ensuring student satisfaction, but also has value in bolstering recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. Students need access to strong advisors and to feel supported through counseling and academic coaching. The diversity of the student body should be celebrated, with instruction intentionally designed to support inclusion and accessibility. Students should feel part of the campus community.

Action: Enhance classroom experience

- Support intentional curriculum and course design to improve accessibility
- Increase faculty use of Teaching and Learning Center resources to expand access

Action: Expand community building activities

- Improve communication
- Promote and expand curricular-based experiential learning
- Support off-campus outreach and community engagement activities (curricular and co-curricular)
- Host day at remote campus facilities (satellite properties)
- Support special events on campus to celebrate diversity and inclusion
- Increase faculty/staff/student interaction

Goal 3: Make ESF a top place to work

ESF benefits by having a diverse workforce who not only feel valued for the work they do but also feel part of the campus community. The campus needs a workforce that is sufficiently sized to achieve our current and future goals. To expand the pool of potential employees we need to create positions and management philosophies that demonstrate inclusiveness and equity to support those coming from diverse backgrounds. ESF also needs to explore new ways to enhance workplace adaptations to provide innovative work options to increase flexibility. The employment satisfaction of any group is predicated on having guidelines for advancement, which are clear, concise, and updated regularly.

Action: Improve employee climate and congeniality

- Improve inclusive workplace culture; embed IDEA-SJ at all levels
- Expand sustainability initiatives and improve employee satisfaction by increasing work adaptation for remote & hybrid options
- Improve recognition of faculty and staff accomplishments and career milestones
- Revitalize Quality of Work Life Committee with appropriate resource allocation

Action: Improve employee advancement

- Build career advancement opportunities to encourage professional growth
- Require and enforce regular staff and faculty reviews
- Increase opportunities and funding for professional development and training
- Revise/refine promotion guidelines for faculty

Action: Improve management processes

- Establish management processes to ensure timely contractual compliance with faculty workload allocations and professional performance plans and evaluations.
- Assess workload allocations through periodic review

Action: Strategically expand faculty and staff

- Mitigate employee burnout by hiring sufficient staff
- Leverage campus culture and commitment to sustainability in recruitment

<u>THEME 2:</u> COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Goal 1: Advance commitment to external community connections

It has long been recognized that the middle school years are critical in developing an academic identity, particularly with regards to their affinity for STEM subjects. ESF can impact a large number of middle school students through expansion of our on-campus summer programs. ESF also needs to engage more with science and math teachers via an expanded portfolio of summer programs, e.g., NSF-supported Research Experiences for Teachers and private-foundation-sponsored teacher professional development opportunities, so as to reach more students in school districts across the CNY region. The ESF impact has massive potential beyond the classroom. Many faculty and staff members at the university are leaders in their field. There is a large opportunity for ESF to increase its presence in the community as a technical expert and guide.

Actions:

- Expand engagement with middle school students through on-campus program offerings and professional development opportunities for science and math teachers.
- Improve ESF's capacity to serve as a technical expert and guide for the community.

Goal 2: Grow sustained STEM career pathways in K-14

ESF recognizes the need to proactively participate in growing the pathways for students in K-12 who will aspire to become STEM majors once they go to college. Much could be gained by having ESF students serving as role models for middle-school students in organized classroom exercises, such as coding, designing, testing, demonstrations, and science communications. Similarly, there are bilateral benefits for graduate students and faculty working with the K-12 community to integrate cutting-edge topics into the K-12 curricula.

Actions:

- Enhance STEM education pathways through the creation of strategic partnerships engaging ESF students and faculty with K-12 schools.
- Create articulation agreements, dual-admission, and transitional programs for first-generation and underrepresented minority students.

Goal 3: Create opportunities for Civic Engagement

ESFs commitment to student volunteerism and civic engagement will support a lifelong path to civic responsibility and enhance positive outcomes in the community.

Actions:

- Redevelop short-term community service opportunities, outreach, longer-term community engagement, and civic engagement, guided reflections, and a commitment on the part of clubs and organizations to support Syracuse and local neighboring communities.
- Re-establish ESF through the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement; to do so, form a Task Force of faculty, staff and students

Goal 4: Enhance and engage industrial and government partnerships

It is imperative for ESF to leverage current and existing relationships to enhance off campus partnerships in industry and the local community. ESF's focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) creates natural synergies to collaborate with the private sector – now including industries long established in CNY and recent arrivals poised to scale up operations. Collaboration with external partners will assist ESF to amplify outreach efforts, build our reputation locally and beyond, and ultimately enhance our ability to achieve our mission.

Actions:

- Expand career-related opportunities for students by enhancing and growing partnerships with public, private, and government organizations.
- Enhance curricular and course sequencing flexibility for students to expand their opportunities at engaging in research and career readiness.

- Enhance connections with industry and government partners and build capacity for ESF to serve as a technical expert and guide to these partners.

Goal 5: Increase ESF's visibility and external communication

ESFs brand visibility should clearly communicate our position as a four-year, STEM, research institution rooted in the environment and focused on operationalizing the principles of sustainability and social justice. The institutions public facing commitment should go further to advance an understanding of who we are and what we value as an institution. To more accurately reflect our designation as the premier doctoral granting institution focused on the environment, ESF will work to drop "College" from its official naming convention. Supporting this enhanced designation will advance the institutions visibility and reputation both locally and on a global scale and confirm our commitment to "Improving our World." This clear institutional narrative will allow for marketing and media strategies to be employed positioning the institution for continued growth.

As part of the strategic planning process, a focus group was created to examine rebranding ESF's official name. Concerns raised: I) existing name is too long often just shortened to ESF; 2) confusing distinction between a University and a College especially for international students; and 3) competing "universities" without graduate programs within and outside of New York State.

Actions:

- Examine institutional branding strategies to include a review of the College name and the creation of active outreach and promotion strategies.
- Develop a detailed and connected media strategy.