



# Academic Affairs Strategic Roadmap 2025-2028

## Innovation, Excellence, and Impact

Sacramento State stands at a pivotal moment in higher education—one defined not by crisis, but by unprecedented opportunity. As we look toward 2028, we see a landscape rich with possibilities to redefine what it means to be a comprehensive public university that serves our diverse community while driving regional and global impact.

Our Academic Affairs Strategic Roadmap 2025-2028 builds upon our institutional strengths while positioning Sacramento State as a leader in the evolving higher education ecosystem. This plan reflects our commitment to innovation that enhances student success, excellence that elevates our academic reputation, and impact that extends far beyond our campus boundaries.

The three strategic priorities outlined in this plan—Digital Transformation and Innovation, Workforce Alignment and Professional Preparation, and Research Excellence and Academic Transformation—represent interconnected pathways to achieving our vision. They acknowledge that today's students need more than traditional educational experiences; they require dynamic, responsive, and forward-thinking approaches that prepare them not just for their first career, but for a lifetime of learning and leadership.

This roadmap focuses Academic Affairs to operationalize Sacramento State's institutional strategic priorities and imperatives, translating the university's overarching imperatives into focused Academic Affairs priorities, goals, and initiatives. As the academic heart of the university, Academic Affairs plays a pivotal role in advancing our institutional mission through teaching, research, and student success. This plan defines how we will strategically position ourselves to build upon the excellent work our faculty and staff are already doing, creating new opportunities and sustainable pathways that enhance our collective impact. By strategically deploying our academic resources, faculty expertise, and programmatic strengths, we will accelerate the university's strategic objectives while ensuring our continued growth and institutional sustainability. Most importantly, it maintains our core commitment to access, equity, and excellence while pushing us to innovate and excel in new ways.

Over the next three years, we will focus on how we teach, learn, and discover together. We will strengthen our partnerships with industry and community while building new bridges to emerging sectors. We will enhance our research capacity while ensuring that discovery directly benefits student learning and regional development.

This is our roadmap for becoming the university our students deserve and our region needs—a Sacramento State that leads with purpose, innovates with intention, and creates lasting impact through everything we do.



## PRIORITY 1: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION

*Strategic Plan Imperatives: Learning and Student Success; Research Creative Activities, and Teaching; Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Resource Development and Sustainability*

**Strategic Goal:** Establish Sacramento State as a pioneer in inclusive digital learning technologies, AI-enabled education, and innovative curricular transformation that prepares all students for a rapidly evolving digital world.

**Initiative 1.1: Faculty-Led Digital Pedagogy Innovation.** *Support faculty, departments, and colleges in developing and implementing innovative digital teaching methods, inclusive learning technologies, and emerging pedagogical approaches that enhance student engagement and success.*

**Initiative 1.2: AI-Enhanced Learning and Teaching.** *Collaborate with faculty, departments, and colleges to explore and integrate artificial intelligence tools that support teaching effectiveness, student learning outcomes, and academic innovation across disciplines.*

**Initiative 1.3: Digital Literacy Integration Across Disciplines.** *Partner with faculty, departments, and colleges to embed digital skills, data literacy, and technological competencies within existing programs and courses to prepare students for evolving career demands.*

**Initiative 1.4: Flexible and Innovative Course Design.** *Empower faculty, departments, and colleges to reimagine course structures through hybrid learning models, experiential technologies, and adaptable formats that meet diverse student needs and learning preferences.*

**Initiative 1.5: School of Innovation.** *Establish a School of Innovation that redefines general education through interdisciplinary mega-class, team-taught courses, flexible formats, and innovative degree programs that breakdown traditional academic silos while maintaining rigorous academic standards.*

**Strategic Rationale:** The imperative for digital transformation in higher education has never been more urgent. The global e-learning market demonstrates explosive growth, valued at \$250 billion in 2023 and expected to reach \$490 billion by 2029, with online education revenue projected to reach \$203 billion in 2025. This represents a fundamental shift in how students expect to learn and engage with educational content. The technological landscape supporting education is rapidly evolving. The AR/VR education market is growing from \$2.9 billion in 2022 to \$14.2 billion by 2028, while mobile learning will reach \$184 billion by 2028, driven by widespread device integration and BYOD adoption in educational institutions. Sacramento State must position itself as a leader or risk irrelevance to digital-native students. EDUCAUSE's 2024 Higher Education Trend Watch confirms institutions are prioritizing digital transformation and institutional resilience, making data-informed decisions while strengthening technology infrastructure. The AI education market is expected to grow at 45.9% CAGR through 2028, with 75% believing AI improves learning outcomes, creating significant opportunities for early adopters. Current student preferences strongly support this shift: 63% of college students choose online study for flexibility, and 49% of full-time faculty have been trained in online learning. By establishing Sacramento State as a pioneer in AI-enabled education and inclusive digital learning technologies, we ensure graduates are prepared for a digitally-driven workforce while creating innovative pathways that serve our diverse student population's varied learning needs and schedules.



### Fundraising & External Partnership Alignment

**Technology:** AI; "Rural Reach" engagement with communities through technology

**Research:** Undergraduate/Graduate/Faculty Research related to AI, Technology, and Innovation

**Academic Innovation:** Innovation College, Cal EPIC, Experiential Learning, Study Abroad, Interdisciplinary Programs, Faculty Development



## PRIORITY 2: WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT AND PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION

*Strategic Plan Imperatives: Learning and Student Success; Community Involvement; Research Creative Activities, and Teaching; Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Wellness & Safety*

**Strategic Goal:** Develop comprehensive, industry-responsive curricula and professional pathways across all sectors with curricular foundations that prepare diverse graduates for leadership and success.

**Initiative 2.1: Liberal Arts Foundation for Professional Preparation.** *Support the integration of critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills from liberal arts disciplines into professionally-focused programs to create well-rounded graduates.*

**Initiative 2.2: Established Sector Program Enhancement.** *Enhance and optimize academic programs in strategic high-demand sectors including healthcare, education, business, and public service through partnerships, resource sharing, and targeted improvements.*

**Initiative 2.3: Educational Pipeline Development - Professional Pathways.** *Facilitate seamless pathways from community colleges through graduate programs, including accelerated degree options and stackable credentials for professional advancement.*

**Initiative 2.4: Emerging Industry Program Development.** *Develop innovative programs in emerging fields through industry partnerships, shared resources, and pilot initiatives that minimize initial investment while meeting new workforce demands.*

**Strategic Rationale:** The imperative for workforce-aligned education has never been more urgent. Current labor market data reveals a fundamental mismatch between higher education outcomes and employer needs that threatens both student success and institutional relevance. With approximately 7.77 million job openings yet persistent skills shortages, employers report that graduates lack practical skills needed for immediate workplace contribution. Georgetown University research demonstrates the crisis scope: in half of the nation's labor markets, at least 50 percent of middle-skills credentials would need to be granted in different fields to meet projected labor demand through 2031. Healthcare exemplifies this—only 1.6% of nurses are unemployed while projecting 193,100 annual job openings by 2032, yet the U.S. expects only 177,400 new nurses between 2022-2032. The economic stakes are substantial. By 2031, 72 percent of jobs will require postsecondary education, with 85% of good jobs going to workers with postsecondary credentials. However, roughly 30 percent of job openings will require middle-skills credentials, creating opportunities for institutions bridging undergraduate education with professional preparation. Students and families increasingly demand educational value that translates to career success. Graduates with debt but lacking employable skills face diminished economic prospects, while employers struggle to fill critical positions. Regional economic development suffers when local institutions cannot supply needed skilled workforce. Sacramento State faces a strategic choice: proactively align programs with workforce needs or risk declining enrollment, reduced employer partnerships, and weakened regional impact. The next three years are critical for establishing competitive advantage through workforce-responsive education.



### Fundraising & External Partnership Alignment

Workforce/Career: Job Placement, Graduate Programs, CCE, Spinoffs/Partnerships, Placer; Stackable Credentials

Health Care: Physical Environment, Mental Health, Physical Health, Biological Sciences

Public Safety/Public Good: Public Service, Teaching, Non-Profit, Journalism, Government Policy, Library, EMT, Engineering-Civil, Criminal Justice, History, Philosophy

Government/Policy: Downtown Democracy Center, Business and Finance, Lobbying and Consulting

Sports/Entertainment: Business, Athletics, Film/TV, Arts



## PRIORITY 3: RESEARCH EXCELLENCE WITH SOCIETAL IMPACT

*Strategic Plan Imperatives: Learning and Student Success; Community Involvement; Research Creative Activities, and Teaching; Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Resource Development and Sustainability*

**Strategic Goal:** Enhance research productivity and scholarly impact while advancing knowledge creation and application that addresses societal challenges.

**Initiative 3.1: Research and Innovation.** *Support faculty in enhancing research capacity through strategic partnerships, collaborative funding opportunities, and developing research centers that address regional and global challenges while providing student research opportunities.*

**Initiative 3.2: Graduate Education Advancement.** *Advance graduate programs across disciplines through enhanced offerings, improved student support and professional development, and innovative delivery methods that maximize existing resources.*

**Initiative 3.3: Faculty Development and Academic Support Systems Enhancement.** *Enhance faculty professional development opportunities through collaborative initiatives, shared resources, and strategic partnerships that promote teaching excellence, student success and faculty advancement.*

**Strategic Rationale:** Research excellence is not merely an academic pursuit—it's become essential for institutional survival and student success in an increasingly competitive landscape. Higher education R&D expenditures reached \$108.8 billion in FY 2023, an 11.2% increase, with federal funding accounting for 55% of total expenditures. This massive investment reflects the critical role universities play in driving innovation and economic development. However, pressure on students to graduate with not only a foundation in thinking and learning but also with career-ready skills on day one is pushing faculty to prepare students differently to succeed in the modern world of work. The 2024 EDUCAUSE Trend Watch reports that institutional leaders are increasingly incorporating high-impact learning practices—often in the form of hands-on research or integration with corporations and civic agencies—into their curriculum. Graduate education advancement is equally critical, as the student population will include a larger proportion of adults at later life stages, as the need for lifelong learning and retooling grows. By enhancing research capacity, advancing graduate programs, and transforming undergraduate education through innovative pedagogical approaches, Sacramento State will create a differentiated value proposition that attracts top faculty and students while generating the knowledge and innovation that addresses both regional and global challenges. This integrated approach ensures our research directly benefits student learning while contributing to societal advancement and economic development. The next three years are crucial for positioning Sacramento State before federal research funding landscapes shift and before competing institutions establish themselves as regional research leaders.



### Fundraising & External Partnership Alignment

Research: Undergraduate/Graduate/Faculty Research

Graduate Education: Graduate Programs, Endowed Faculty Positions

Academic Support: Basic Needs (academic impact), Access, Life Skills, Experiential Learning

Inclusive Excellence: Honors Program