

# UVA TODAY EDITORIAL PLAN

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**2019-20**

**UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS** recently completed development of its next five-year communications plan, while at the same time “A Great and Good University: The 2030 Plan” was endorsed by the Board of Visitors. The University Communications plan was developed in part to more directly align our work with UVA’s newest strategic priorities. As part of that realignment, University Content and News began an assessment of its approach to finding and telling stories on our owned channels. This process included a thorough review of the “The 2030 Plan” with a commitment to add new coverage areas or adjust existing approaches to directly support strategic priorities and initiatives. UVA Today last reconfigured its coverage areas in 2015, with minor adjustments in subsequent years.

The changes to UVA Today coverage areas will include the addition or revision of specific initiatives as well as a commitment to generate content reflecting broad, strategic themes of the “The 2030 Plan.”

# The 10 Big Bets

UVA's new strategic plan reaches far and wide in its effort to establish a roadmap for how UVA can become known as the best public institution by 2030. This means it includes broad areas—the four strategic goals—under which a range of efforts can support some strategic aspiration. This gives us license to find and tell great stories no matter where they are. The plan also specifically lists ten initiatives that have been described as “big bets.” These give us very specific projects to support, and we will do so robustly on the timeline adopted by the University for their implementation.

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## Thematic Areas

### **SERVICE**

One of the four pillars establishes a goal to “Make UVA Synonymous With Service.” In the plan, service includes offering an affordable education and excellent health care. It includes expanding academic offerings beyond Grounds and supporting entrepreneurship and activities/operations that benefit communities and economies. We also know that service reflects instances when people at UVA literally serve or help others in some way, through their jobs, in their personal lives and across the community. Our expectation is that UVA Today staff will search for stories that demonstrate service from their respective beat areas.

### **FACULTY AND FACULTY RECRUITMENT**

Faculty is a thematic topic in that news and features about the work of our faculty can and should emerge from every writer's coverage area. But the topic should be assigned to a staff member with the expectation of regular discussion of story ideas and priorities of the Provost's Office to help inform our coverage decisions.

### **ALUMNI**

Bringing attention to the successes and activities of alumni emerged as a popular content category in the past several years. We will continue to feature alumni stories across all of our coverage areas and highlight those that reflect strategic priorities as often as possible.

### **DIVERSITY**

Diversity is no single person's beat area. It is a shared theme that must be present across our content, from the people who are featured in stories and images to the evolution of our efforts at the institutional level to increase diversity in enrollment, faculty and staff, through policies and other avenues. We will continue, however, to assign a specific writer to maintain regular communication with the Office of the VP for Diversity and Equity, and other units that directly support institutional diversity. Stories reflecting diversity should also illustrate how diversity applies not just to ethnicity or background, but also to the vibrancy of diversity of thought and discourse.

## **STAFF**

Our coverage plans will include a commitment to tell more stories about our staff in ways that align with strategic priorities of “The 2030 Plan,” including those that demonstrate the University’s reputation as a great place to work and grow a career. As an example, UVA Today will explore publication of a series of feature stories about University staff members who are stalwarts in their communities outside of work.

## **RESPONSIBLE LEADERS AND ETHICS**

This is another thematic area that will appear in stories that are told from across our coverage areas. Many strategic themes identified in “The 2030 Plan” appear in multiple places. For example, a feature about a student who conducts medical research, tutors in local schools, and is a Student Council member would touch on several strategic themes – including responsible/ethical leadership.

## **HONOR THE FUTURE**

We will create and distribute content, and seek earned media, that supports the “Honor the Future” campaign by emphasizing how philanthropy improves the quality of education, instruction, research, diversity and access, the community, patient care and the breadth of the student experience.

## **BRIDGE BUILDING**

UVA Today will continue to find ways to highlight bridge-builders as a consistent theme. Our challenge is to define the next iteration of our bridge-building content, including its presentation and distribution.

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# **Beat Areas**

*Following are specific coverage areas have been added or revised in our assignment areas as a result of our review of “The 2030 Plan.” Note that UVA Today content comes from across Grounds and is produced by staff writers and by communicators across schools and units. Our approach is to serve as a content hub and work closely with communications partners to find and share stories. This remains true of schools with substantial communications staff, such as Darden, and the new School of Data Science, which is still developing its communications structure.*

## **HEALTH AND MEDICAL**

University Content and News enjoys a strong relationship with UVA Health communicators. “The 2030 Plan” shows that UVA Today must build on this foundation by focusing more energy on finding and telling stories from UVA Health and the UVA School of Medicine that complement the content produced by their communicators. Patient care and medical research are key components of the strategic plan’s “service” theme, while “precision medicine” and “the brain and neuroscience” are among the set of specific areas identified to achieve research preeminence.

## **VALUE PROPOSITION**

The University's strategic plan emphasizes many components of what contribute to UVA's value proposition. UVA Today currently covers them across different beats, but could provide more emphasis and coordination by combining these various facets under one staff member's primary responsibility. The value proposition coverage area will include stories about admission, job placement, career services, cost and debt, rankings, graduation rates, financial aid, etc. It will include activities and programs that emerge from the strategic plan's "SuccessUVA" initiative.

## **RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE/STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

UVA Today excels at telling stories that illustrate the quality of the student experience. And the opportunities are limitless, because the experience is both about the place and its people. While student experience coverage will continue to occur across the department, including residential/student experience as a specific beat component will allow us to be more intentional around telling stories that align with the institution's definition of the characteristics of a unique UVA experience. For example, are there new programs or features that should be highlighted? What are the metrics the institution will follow as indicators of positive student experiences?

## **CONTINUING AND NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION**

"The 2030 Plan" includes "bachelor's completion and certificate programs" as one of its ten "big bets." We have assigned this to a writer, with the expectation that the coverage highlights and supports initiatives as they emerge. This beat also will be responsible for the evolution of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies and related efforts to advance lifelong learning.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

Scholarships are not called out in the strategic plan, but have been a consistent issue for us to manage in terms of quantity, quality and expectations. In the next year, Managing Editor, Molly Minturn, will coordinate a new approach to how we report on and highlight scholarships that will provide us more flexibility and more options.

## **NORTHERN VIRGINIA**

UVA has growing interest in expanding its Northern Virginia operations, as articulated in the "broadening our horizons" big bet of the new strategic plan. Assigning this coverage responsibility ensures that it remains on our radar and that we have established ties to UVA's NOVA leadership to keep informed about and support developments.

## **RESEARCH**

University Content and News must redefine how it covers research. The level of our coverage is currently mismatched for a Tier 1 research university. In addition, the areas we typically have emphasized through our storytelling have not necessarily reflected the University's priorities—though this is difficult to determine because UVA's research priorities have not always been particularly well-defined. "The 2030 Plan" provides more direction.

Aligning directly with the plan, we will assign these specific research priorities to individual news associates:

- **SCHOOL OF DATA SCIENCE**
- **DEMOCRACY**
- **ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY**
- **PRECISION MEDICINE**
- **BRAIN AND NEUROSCIENCE**
- **DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY**

Each assignment will begin with the expectation that the writer conducts research and preliminary interviews to more fully and clearly identify the scope of the research, activities, areas of emphasis, etc. This exercise will build source relationships and provide us a better understanding of the breadth of the research areas so we can find compelling stories to tell that directly support the research priorities.

UVA Today will continue to find interesting, newsworthy research stories from across schools and units, institutes and centers. These will include basic sciences, engineering, education, medicine, business, law and the humanities. Our coverage also will be informed by regular communication with the VPR office, provost and UVA Health.

### **COMMUNITY/GOOD NEIGHBOR**

UVA's new strategic plan emphasizes in multiple places our intention to strengthen the UVA community and the broader Charlottesville-area community—a relationship the plan and our own survey research indicates as needing improvement. UVA Today's coverage must consistently seek and highlight examples of how UVA is living up to its values and working to ensure that the region is “among the best and most equitable places to live, work and study.” This includes supporting the initiatives of the President's Advisory Council for Community Partnership and other institutional efforts. It includes Madison House, education outreach and community initiatives coordinated by the vice provost for academic outreach. It includes shining a light on the many individual and collective connections between UVA and its people within the local communities. It includes telling difficult stories about the University's past, with a goal of candidly addressing our shortcomings so that today's efforts are in the best position to generate improvements that benefit everyone.

### **LIBERAL ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES**

These areas are essential to the University and a significant part of what makes it one of the nation's top institutions. Our current coverage strategy scatters components of the humanities among multiple beats. This approach makes some sense, given the variety—from the arts to English to history or sociology. A humanities story can be about the student experience, research and community all at once. However, we will specify that liberal arts and social sciences are the primary responsibility of a writer, providing emphasis and setting the expectation that stories from this area are important to our content mix as well as the institution.

## **MOLLY MINTURN**

- Scholarships
- Center for Undergraduate Excellence
- College administrative level liaison
- Provost/faculty liaison

## **MCGREGOR MCCANCE**

- NOVA
- Honor the Future liaison

## **WES HESTER**

- President's staff liaison
- Institutional priorities lead
- Major personnel announcements

## **CAROLINE NEWMAN**

- Darden
- McIntire
- Health & Medical  
*(including precision medicine research thematic)*
- Architecture
- Arts
- Miller Center
- Center for Politics
- Democracy theme/initiative

## **MATT KELLY**

- History
- Batten
- Engineering
- Economics
- Facilities
- UPD/ROTC
- Continuing, nontraditional, SCPS

## **FARISS SAMARRAI**

- Basic science
- VPR
- School of Data Science
- Brain/neuroscience research thematic
- Environmental resilience and sustainability research thematic
- Biomechanical engineering

## **DAN HEUCHERT**

- Principal copy editor
- Accolades
- Special features

## **ANNE BROMLEY**

- Liberal Arts and the Social Sciences
- Nursing
- Diversity and Equity  
*(Office of VP, OAAA, Woodson Institute)*
- Libraries
- Contemplative Sciences
- Center for Teaching Excellence
- Obituaries
- Lines of Communication  
*(internal University Communications newsletter)*

## **JANE KELLY**

- Global
- Residential/student experience thematic
- Value Proposition  
*(admission, job placement, career services, cost and debt, rankings, graduation rates, financial aid, SuccessUVA)*
- Psychology
- Law

## **WHITEY REID**

- Community/good neighbor thematic
- Cooper Center
- Curry School
- Innovation  
*(Licensing & Ventures, entrepreneurship, commercialization, etc.)*
- Media Studies
- Digital Technology & Society research thematic
- Athletics