

# UVA TODAY EDITORIAL PLAN

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## **2020-21**

The University of Virginia’s “Great and Good” 10-year 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. It includes four broad pillars, under which a wide range of things that happen here support our strategic aspirations. This gives us license to find and tell great stories no matter where they are. The plan also specifically lists 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.

With the University’s strategic plan now entering its second year, University Communications has revisited its annual work plan to organize its efforts in support of existing and new priorities. This editorial plan complements the University Communications work plan and reflects emerging areas of emphasis. Principal among these is our concentrated and sustained effort to produce and distribute content that is strategically supportive of UVA’s ongoing commitment to carry out its mission amid a global pandemic – on [news.virginia.edu](https://news.virginia.edu), in the UVA Today Daily Report, UVA This Month and on social media platforms.

# Thematic Areas

## **PANDEMIC RESILIENCE**

The arrival of the global coronavirus pandemic disrupted normal operations for everyone. UVA's decision to shift to online instruction in the spring semester was supported by multiple communications efforts, including a virus information website, the creation of a virtual Final Exercises celebration, the launch of a weekly COVID-19 information update newsletter and the Return to Grounds digital platform and public health campaign. These activities continue into this year and will remain significant operational demands for the foreseeable future.

The Content & News unit will continue to produce and distribute content that supports the ongoing need to communicate accurate, actionable information about UVA's response to the pandemic to our audiences. Our content will illustrate the University fulfilling its mission to teach, research and provide patient care, through the lens of the pandemic. This includes stories of the University's scholarship and teaching about issues related to the pandemic; stories of our faculty and medical experts conducting research and analysis of the virus and related issues with societal benefit; and of our ability to provide exceptional care in the detection, prevention and treatment of the virus, to the UVA community and the larger community beyond Grounds. It will also capture the persistence and perseverance of our community.

It will include strategic content that reflects leadership's decision-making, preparation and focus on safety for the University community and the broader Charlottesville community. Our content will provide timely, basic, actionable information that guides students, faculty and staff through this new reality, and will provide narratives that elevate UVA's reputation for service through compelling storytelling, visuals and social media content.

## **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. UVA Today staff will search for stories that demonstrate service from their respective beat areas.

## **RESEARCH**

Content and News' approach to research-related storytelling will demonstrate the scope and impact of UVA's research endeavors. We will grow and refine content and strategy, collaborating with the Digital and Marketing teams, for the UVA Research Digest product to bolster the University's research reputation and grow readership and engagement.

## **FACULTY AND STAFF**

We will produce content that illustrates the quality of faculty instruction and research, the professionalism and competence of staff and, by extension, elevates the University's reputation as a great place to teach, work and provide service to others.

## **CITIZEN LEADERS AND ETHICS**

This is another thematic area that will appear in stories told across our coverage areas. Many strategic themes identified in the “Great and Good” 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.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION**

DEI is no single person’s beat area. It’s 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 DEI in enrollment, faculty, staff, through policies and other avenues. We will continue to assign a specific writer to maintain regular communication with the Office of the VP for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and other units that directly support institutional diversity and work on racial equity. 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.

## **DIFFICULT TRUTHS**

This content will communicate UVA’s values and progress through storytelling that demonstrates the University’s commitment to candidly assess and address difficult truths about its past and present concerning slavery, segregation and other forms of racial inequity. Content should address critical issues with a goal of engaging in community-building and open dialogue.

## **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 seek to highlight those that reflect strategic priorities as often as possible.

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# Beat Areas

Following are specific coverage areas selected to align with the “Great and Good” plan. Note that UVA Today content comes from across Grounds and is produced by staff writers and by communicators at schools and units. Our approach is to serve as a content hub and work closely with communications partners to find and share stories.

## **HEALTH AND MEDICAL**

University Content and News enjoys a strong relationship with UVA Health communicators. The “Great and Good” plan shows that UVA Today must build on this foundation by focusing more energy on finding and telling stories from UVA Health and 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.

## **RESEARCH**

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**

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

## **VALUE PROPOSITION**

The value proposition coverage area includes stories about admission, job placement, career services, cost and debt, rankings, graduation rates, financial aid, etc. It includes activities and programs that emerge from the strategic plan’s “SuccessUVA” initiative.

## **STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

UVA Today excels at telling stories that illustrate the vibrancy and breadth of the student experience. And the opportunities are limitless, because the experience is both about the place and its people. Our student experience coverage occurs across the department and will continue to do so. But including residential and student experience as a specific beat component allows us to be more intentional around telling stories that align with the institution’s definition of the characteristics of a unique UVA experience.

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

The “Great and Good” plan includes “bachelor’s completion and certificate programs” as one of its big bets. We have assigned this to a writer, with the expectation that the coverage highlights and supports initiatives as they emerge from this big bet. But the beat also will be responsible for the evolution of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies and related efforts to advance lifelong learning.

## **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. This fiscal year, we will monitor UVA’s activities and initiatives in NOVA, and remain poised to provide them a significant boost in our content streams as desired by University leadership.

## **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. UVA Today’s coverage must consistently seek and highlight examples of how UVA is living up to its values and is 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, the Equity Center, the Racial Equity Taskforce 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.

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## **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
- Community initiatives

## **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

## **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**

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