



VCU

Residential Life and Housing

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2028



TABLE OF CONTENTS

→ Preface	Page 3
→ History & Context	Page 4
→ Mission, Vision & Values	Page 9
→ Strategic Framework	Page 12
→ Implementation Strategy	Page 13

PREFACE



In the summer of 2023, the Residential Life and Housing (RLH) Department at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) engaged with stakeholders across the campus community to initiate the development of our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. The purpose of this planning effort, along with a facilities Master Plan refresh scheduled for completion in 2025, is to establish a comprehensive framework to guide decision-making and enhance the residential experience over the next four years in alignment with both the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) Strategic Pillars and VCU’s Quest 2028 strategic plan themes.

To ensure the Plan accurately reflects our strategic goals, criteria and objectives for success were defined according to our unique operational paradigm. Recognizing that plans must adapt to dynamic circumstances, we aimed to create a flexible yet robust foundation for continued growth and evolution.

Our planning process included extensive stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the voices of residents, student and professional staff, and our campus partners were integral to the Plan’s development. We conducted focus groups with various functional areas of the department, soliciting feedback from students and on-campus partners to ground our objectives in our core “CIRCLE” values of Collaboration, Inclusion & Diversity, Resident Centered, Learning, and Excellence.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following members of the Residential Life and Housing Strategic Planning Committee who generously supported the development of the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan:

- Gavin Roark, Executive Director for Residential Life and Housing
- Heidi Rechin, Communications Specialist
- Megan Becker, Ed. D., Director of Residential Life
- NyAsia Shaw, Assistant Director of Residential Life
- Samantha Hill, Assistant Director of Facilities
- Samuel West, Assistant Director of Assessment for Residential Life and Housing
- Tevin Habeebullah, Assignments Coordinator



HISTORY



Residential Life and Housing at VCU has a dynamic history that mirrors the institution's growth and commitment to student success. Established to address the increasing demand for on-campus housing, RLH has evolved significantly since its inception.

Formation and Early Years

Residential Life and Housing was formally established in the early 1970s, with the primary goal of providing safe and inclusive housing for a rapidly-growing student body. The initial focus was on accommodating the increasing number of students by constructing new residence halls and enhancing residential services.

Expansion and Development

Throughout the 1980s, RLH saw substantial expansion. A key milestone during this period was the construction of the Gladding Residence Center (GRC) in 1984. Named after Jane Bell Gladding, a former professor, Dean of Women at RPI and Associate Dean of Students at VCU, GRC originally consisted of two three-story buildings.

Innovation and Growth

In the 2000s, RLH continued to innovate by incorporating advanced technologies and sustainable practices. Significant developments included the addition of GRC III in 2003 and the major reconstruction of GRC I & II in 2016, which was completed and opened as a single, modern facility offering two different room types in 2018. This era also saw the introduction of Living-Learning Communities, leadership development programs and diversity initiatives, underscoring RLH's commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.

Recent Developments

Over the past decade, RLH has continued to grow and modernize, further enhancing the on-campus living experience. Significant additions include West Grace South, which opened in 2012 and housed the ASPIRE Living-Learning Program, which focused on community engagement. West Grace North, which opened in 2013, was originally home to the GLOBE Living-Learning Program, emphasizing global education and international experiences. These programs have since evolved, with West Grace North now hosting the VCU Transform Living-Learning Program, launched in 2021. The Grace & Broad Residence Center, opened in 2015, has also contributed to the department's mission by partnering with the da Vinci Center for Innovation to provide space for their Shift Retail Lab.



BUILDING HISTORY TIMELINE



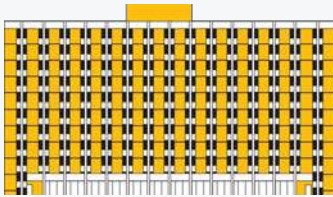
1959

Opening of Low Rises: Bear, McRae, Rudd, and Warner
(closed in 2016)



1965

Johnson Hall is acquired by VCU
(closed in 2021)



1967

Opening of Cabaniss
(closed in 2019)



1968

Opening of Rhoads Hall



1979

Opening of Gladding Residence Center (GRC) Phase I
(closed in 2016)



1982

Opening of Gladding Residence Center (GRC) Phase II
(closed in 2016)



2001

Opening of Ackell Residence Center



2002

Honors College Acquired & Converted from a Hospital to a Residence Hall



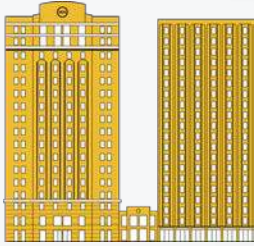
2003

Opening of Broad & Belvidere



2003

Opening of GRC III



2005

Opening of Brandt Hall



2009

Opening of Cary & Belvidere



2012

Opening of West Grace South



2013

Opening of West Grace North



2015

Opening of Grace & Broad Residence Center

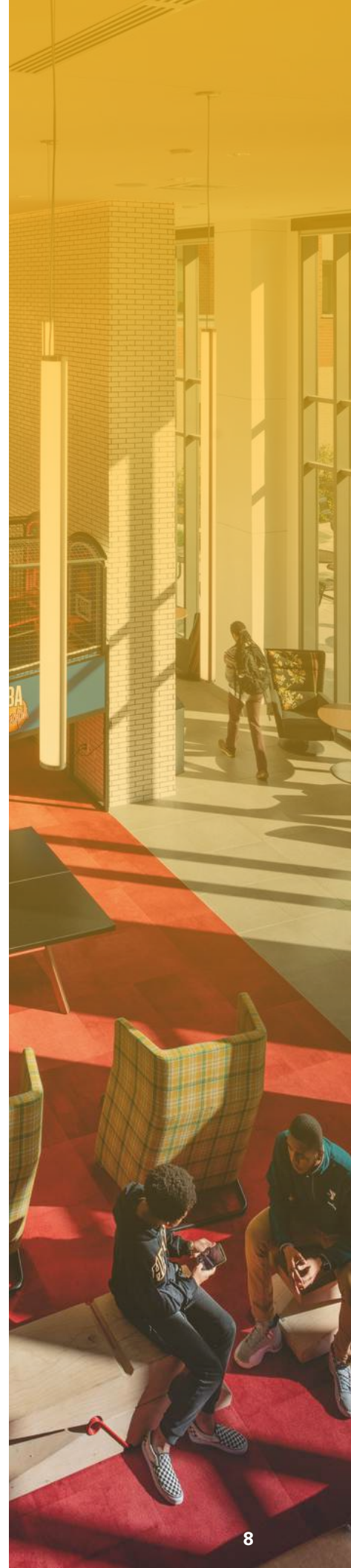
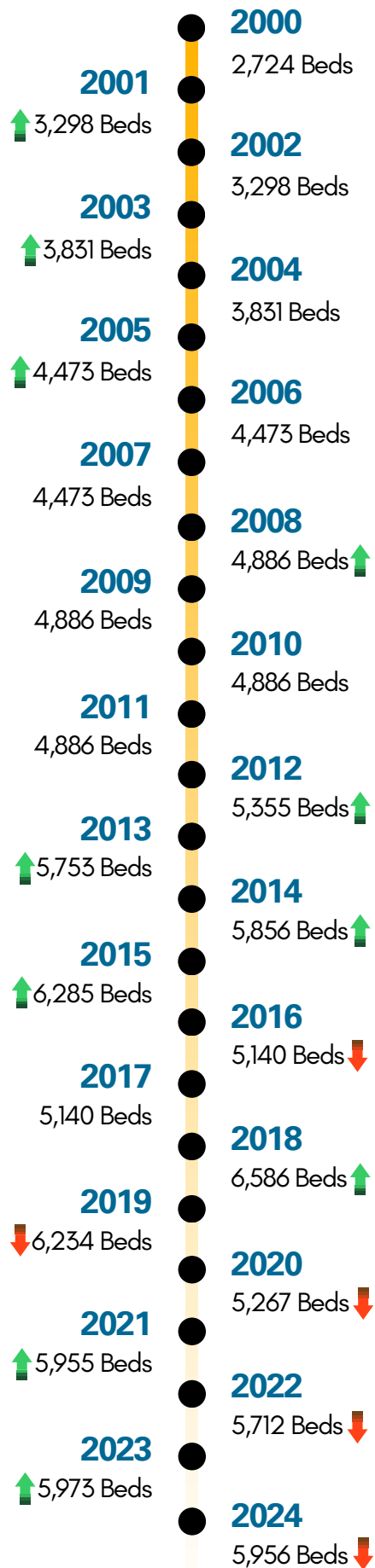


2018

Reopening of the New Gladding Residence Center

OCCUPANCY HISTORY TIMELINE

Note: Bed counts in the timeline below reflect the number of beds on July 1 of each year listed.



MISSION, VISION & VALUES



The mission and vision of Residential Life and Housing at VCU articulates the profound impact we aim to make within our university community. These guiding principles are the strategic backbone for our decision making, influencing both our immediate actions and long-term aspirations.

While the mission and vision provide the foundation for our outcome-driven goals, our values outline the key attributes that our organization must embody to achieve our overarching purpose.

MISSION

Residential Life and Housing at VCU provides safe, inclusive, and well-maintained facilities where we work together to build intentional communities to empower residents in their academic excellence, citizenship, and personal growth.

VISION

Residential Life and Housing at VCU will be a preeminent urban, public on-campus community providing a one-of-a-kind residential experience.

VALUES

Guiding this mission is a set of departmental values, which complement the core values of the institution:

Collaboration

We value the exchange of ideas and solutions through internal and external partnerships. This value is exemplified through the enhancement of the residential experience via training, community building, policy development, and integration of services.

Inclusion & Diversity

We value celebration, exploration, and understanding among people, ideas, and cultures. This value is exemplified through the creation of a safe and inclusive environment for all students to explore identities of self and others; promoting a lifelong commitment to successful living in a global community; and ensuring that policies, programs, and services are inclusive and reflect the diversity of our community.

VALUES

Resident Centered

We value and recognize that our residents are at the core of our mission and practices. This value is exemplified in our commitment to encouraging and promoting the student voice and providing opportunities for comprehensive student learning, development, and leadership.

Learning

We value academic and personal success for all students. This value is exemplified through our emphasis on engagement and education outside the classroom and ensuring a dynamic residential setting where discovery, challenge and support, innovation, and respectful discourse are paramount to the on-campus experience of the student.

Excellence

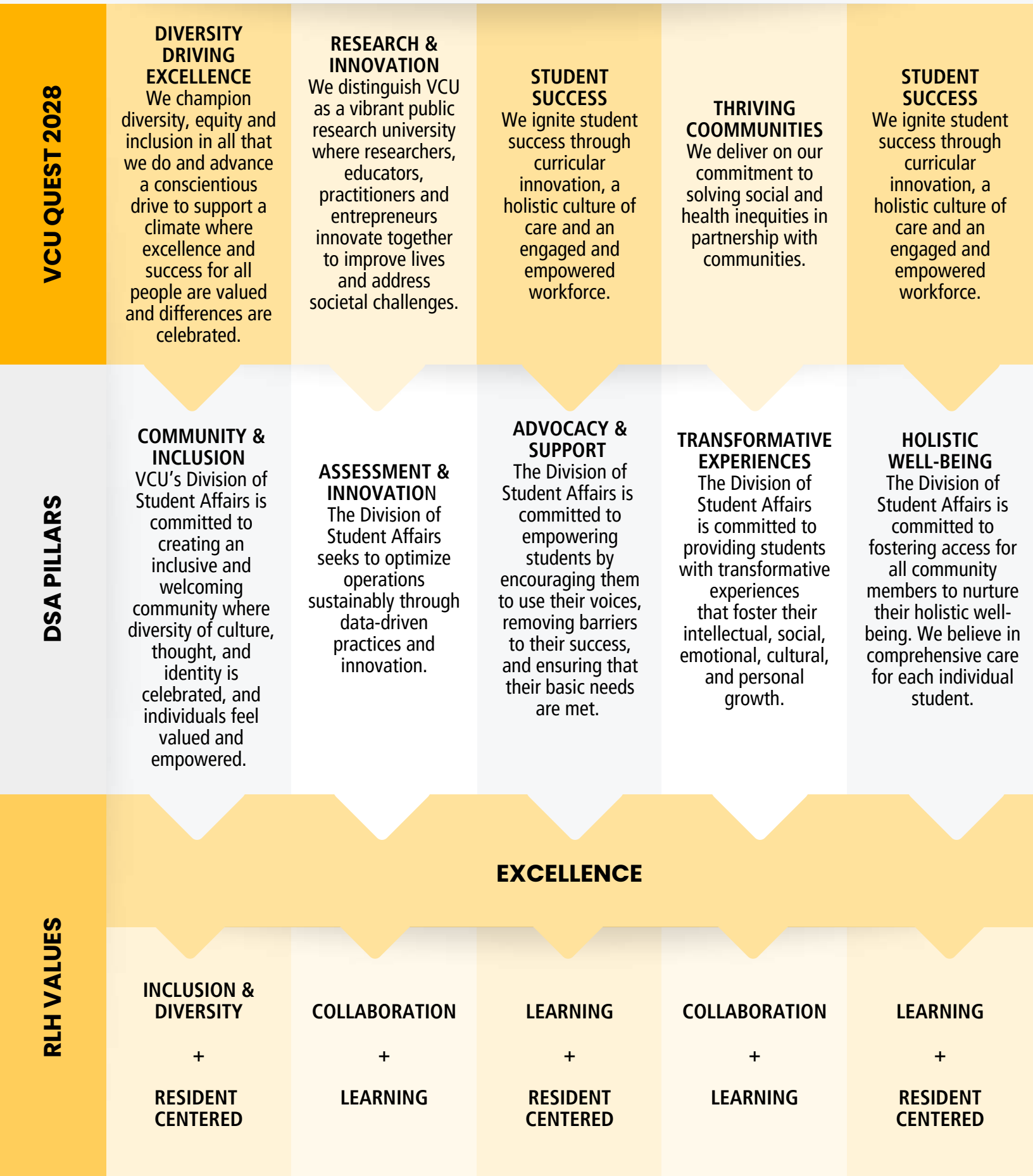
We value the individual and collective pursuit of exceptional practice in our work and relationships. This value is exemplified through high expectations of staff and students in the residential community. Staff and students continually seek ways to contribute to the future of the department, division, institution, and profession.

As reflected in our mission, vision, and values, we are inclusive. Being open to all people and perspectives allows us to have a greater positive impact. We exhibit inclusive excellence by:

- Welcoming and affirming the authentic presence and participation of all community members.
- Recognizing that all members deserve the opportunity to fulfill their full potential within the VCU community.
- Actively reviewing inclusive practices for all social identities and implementing them where possible at official RLH events and initiatives.
- Providing proactive educational opportunities and resources for students and staff to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their daily work.



CONNECTING OUR WORK TO VCU AND THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



Our Strategic Framework outlines the core priorities and guiding principles that will shape Residential Life and Housing (RLH) over the next four years. This framework is designed to ensure that all efforts, from operational decisions to community engagement, align with our mission of fostering an inclusive, thriving, and innovative on-campus experience. By focusing on the experiences of our residents and staff, embracing diversity, and committing to sustainable resource management, this plan positions us to respond effectively to both immediate and future challenges. These efforts will help us remain responsive to the evolving needs of our community while also contributing to broader institutional goals.

Our strategy is built around five key focus areas, each addressing a critical aspect of the student and staff experience:

- **Enhance the Resident-Centered Experience:** We aim to cultivate a living environment where every student feels a sense of belonging, engagement, and personal growth. This includes constantly improving communication, programming, and conflict resolution practices to better serve our residents.
- **Empower Staff Development and Leadership:** We are committed to supporting our professional and student staff by providing meaningful opportunities for leadership, mentorship, and skill development, ensuring their growth translates into a better experience for those we serve.
- **Foster Inclusive Excellence and Belonging:** At the heart of our mission is creating spaces that reflect the diversity of our community. We will continue to build programs, policies, and initiatives that celebrate all identities, ensuring all residents feel welcome, supported, and heard.
- **Drive Operational Integrity and Resource Management:** Through thoughtful use of technology and resource stewardship, we will create efficiencies that enhance the residential experience without compromising on quality or accessibility. Our focus is on transparency, sustainability, and continuous improvement.
- **Innovate in Facility Development and Safety:** Our commitment to safety and modernization ensures that our residence halls remain dynamic, adaptable spaces that meet both current and future student needs. This focus on innovation will help us maintain secure, comfortable, and forward-thinking living environments.

Each of these focus areas represents a foundational element of our approach, and their success is dependent on collaboration across all levels of the university community. By aligning our efforts with the Division of Student Affairs' guiding principles and VCU's Quest 2028, we are setting a clear path forward—one that is responsive to today's realities while being flexible to adapt to future opportunities.

This strategic framework not only guides our efforts but also serves as a living document, continuously evolving to meet the changing landscape of higher education and student life. As we work toward achieving these goals, we are committed to ongoing assessment and adjustment, ensuring that our initiatives remain impactful and relevant.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY



OUTCOME GOALS



Based on the strategic drivers, we have identified the above outcome goals essential for achieving our mission and vision. These goals represent a continuous pursuit, guiding our organization toward its ultimate aspirations. They serve as a constant direction for our efforts, drawing us ever closer to their full realization. These outcome goals will remain consistent throughout this Plan's duration and will inform future strategic plans.

Our ability to achieve these overarching outcome goals is dependent on defining and implementing tangible performance goals—specific, measurable objectives that can be accomplished within a few years. Therefore, the actionable items in our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan are based on the performance goals detailed on the following pages. They are aligned with the identified outcome goals.

The following section outlines the specific initiatives and recommended implementation strategy for each of the outcome goals. Additionally, a preliminary timeline has been developed to guide our personnel's efforts in pursuing each established goal.



GOAL 1

RESIDENT-CENTERED LIVING EXPERIENCE

DSA Pillar Alignment: Advocacy & Support, Holistic Well-Being, Transformative Student Experiences

VCU Quest 2028 Alignment: Thriving Communities, Student Success

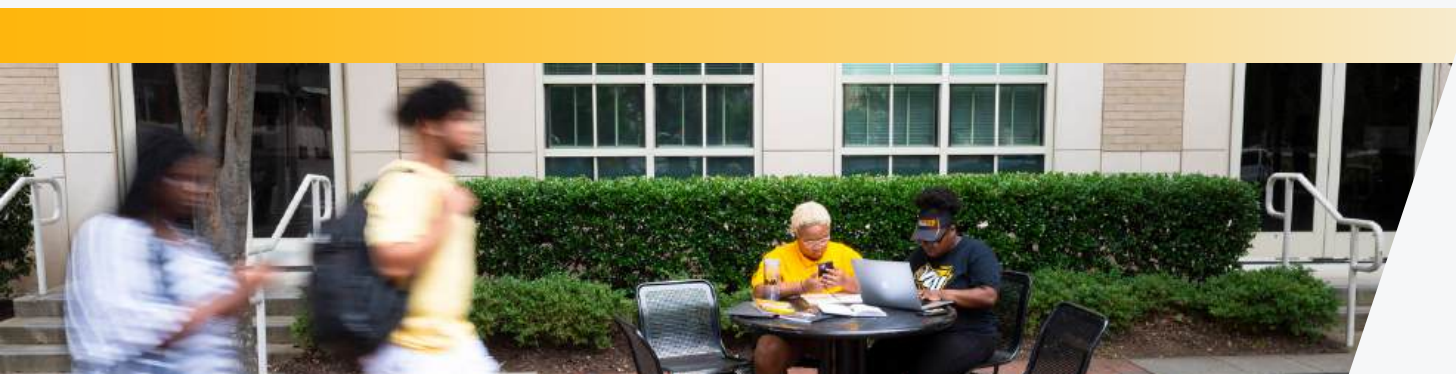
Initiatives & Strategies:

1.1 Foster a sense of belonging and community among residents.

- Reevaluate the Community Development Model to ensure it meets the needs of all residents.
- Improve communication practices with residents and conference guests to enhance transparency and engagement.
- Enhance conduct and care support to better address resident and conference guest conflicts.
- Annually review and modify the Guide to Residential Living to reflect current student needs and preferences.
- Update our assignments process to allow first-year residents to fill a four- or eight-person suite with their selected roommate group.
- Provide focused programming on resilience, conflict management, and life skills for residents.

1.2 Enhance living and learning experiences across different resident groups.

- Improve communication and education around the returner process.
- Expand the Sophomore Year Experience (SYE) partnerships.
- Enhance Living-Learning Community (LLC) offerings, including the development of a First-Year Experience (FYE) LLC.
- Continue to add beds to address demand for upperclass housing.
- Explore new LLCs or themed housing options tailored to diverse interests and academic goals.
- Strengthen support for specialized communities, such as the Lavender House LLC, and develop additional support for underrepresented residential populations.
- Continue to implement regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and focus groups, to continually assess and improve the resident experience.





GOAL 2

STAFF DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP

DSA Pillar Alignment: Transformative Student Experiences, Advocacy & Support, Assessment & Innovation

VCU Quest 2028 Alignment: Research & Innovation, Diversity Driving Excellence

Initiatives & Strategies:

- 2.1 Enhance communication and connection opportunities for professional and student staff.**
 - Standardize RA staff meeting times for consistent communication.
 - Offer more professional development workshops for student staff.
 - Continue programs to strengthen connections between the Executive Director and staff, including 1:1 meetings for new hires.
 - Schedule optional networking time for professional and student staff to build connections.

- 2.2 Improve professional staff engagement.**
 - Invest in formal training, coaching, and mentoring for new managers.
 - Standardize hiring processes and onboarding.
 - Connect to DSA opportunities to develop entry- and mid-level staff.

- 2.3 Provide professional development opportunities, build skill sets, and increase job performance.**
 - Offer recurring professional development opportunities and integrate professional development into meetings.
 - Educate professional staff about University-provided development opportunities, such as cross-training, LinkedIn Learning discussions, Talent@VCU connections, and tuition benefit education.
 - Encourage professional involvement in state, regional, and/or national level organizations through conference attendance, presentations, award nominations, etc.

- 2.4 Ensure equitable workloads and compensation to enhance staff retention.**
 - Audit all position descriptions at least once throughout the Strategic Plan cycle.
 - Continue to post salary ranges on job postings.
 - Improve clarity on career development paths to allow staff to achieve salary growth outside of the annual merit process.
 - Educate and reaffirm the merit process and other benefits of working at VCU.

- 2.5 Boost staff morale and recognition.**
 - Review and enhance department-level recognition programs and initiatives.
 - Take advantage of recognition opportunities provided by the university, division, and HR.
 - Consistently nominate staff for recognition and awards at the state, regional, and/or national level, and share that recognition with the department and university.
 - Ensure supervisors recognize staff contributions in a way that is appreciated by the person being recognized.



GOAL 3

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE & BELONGING

DSA Pillar Alignment: Community & Inclusion, Advocacy & Support, Holistic Well-Being

VCU Quest 2028 Alignment: Diversity Driving Excellence, Student Success

Initiatives & Strategies:

3.1 Support diverse student identities and needs.

- Expand the Lavender House LLC to include upperclass students.
- Prioritize gender-inclusive housing in any future construction projects or building upgrades.
- Be mindful about intersectional student identities (such as disability, religion, nationality, etc.) when planning new construction projects or building upgrades.

3.2 Involve all functional areas in efforts contributing to our departmental culture.

- Assess current buy-in for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts within the department and explore different recognition opportunities for current DEI efforts.
- Affirm departmental commitment to continued staff education focused on DEI knowledge and skills.
- Standardize DEI Talent@VCU check-ins and evaluations and provide shared training for all managers on setting and evaluating DEI goals.
- Ensure department efforts are genuine, personalized, and aligned with divisional and institutional expectations.
- Develop short-, mid-, and long-term departmental DEI goals, such as the re-formation of DEI committees, standardization of DEI training for staff members, continued evaluation of our gender inclusive facilities policy.
- Highlight the department's use of SWaM (small, women-owned, and minority-owned) vendors and establish a baseline of SWaM vendor usage to improve upon.





GOAL 4

OPERATIONAL INTEGRITY & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

DSA Pillar Alignment: Assessment & Innovation, Advocacy & Support, Community & Inclusion

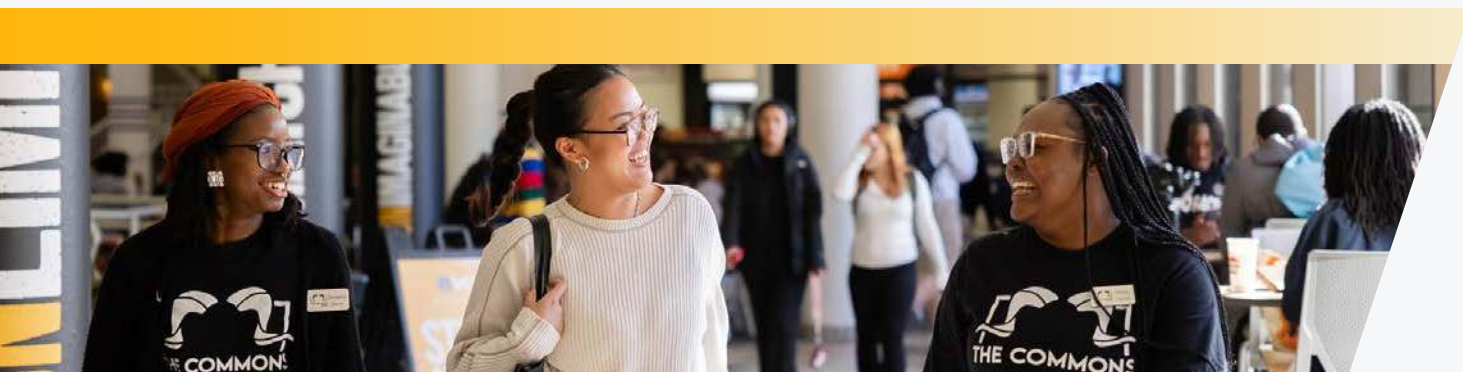
VCU Quest 2028 Alignment: Student Success, Research & Innovation

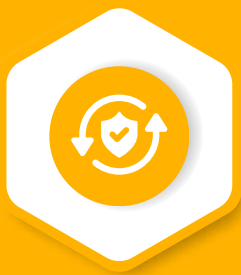
Initiatives & Strategies:

- 4.1 Improve collaboration with campus and community partners to provide additional resources for residents.**
 - Communicate on-campus housing processes and timelines as early as possible.
 - Reinstigate National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) to improve recognition efforts of our campus partners.
 - Include information on our website about off-campus housing.

- 4.2 Increase transparency in decision-making processes.**
 - Implement a communication platform for project tracking.
 - Educate staff on decision-making processes and roles.
 - Train hiring managers on hiring processes and steps.
 - Include professional staff education on various processes, such as PCard, offboarding, procurement, and evaluations.

- 4.3 Foster innovation in operational processes.**
 - Explore and implement new technologies or software that can streamline operations and improve service delivery.
 - Regularly review and update operational procedures to reflect best practices and increase efficiency.
 - Pilot new initiatives that could lead to improved resource management or operational integrity.





GOAL 5

FACILITY INNOVATION & SAFETY

DSA Pillar Alignment: Holistic Well-Being, Advocacy & Support, Community & Inclusion

VCU Quest 2028 Alignment: Research & Innovation, Student Success

Initiatives & Strategies:

5.1 Increase resident engagement within hall community spaces.

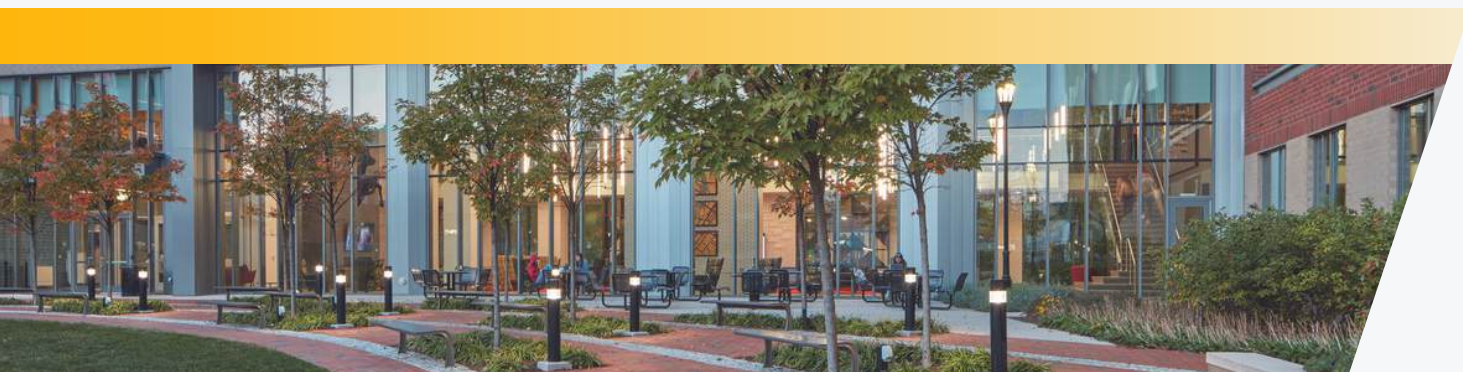
- Conduct assessment of how current residents are utilizing community spaces.
- Benchmark with other institutions on community space utilization.
- Hold two to three student feedback sessions during the academic year to check in on community space usage.
- Continue to increase a sense of community for conference services guests and intern housing.

5.2 Improve quality of housing for all students and conference services guests.

- Align amenities across all buildings to create a consistent experience.
- Update the Housing Master Plan.
- Consider contract length changes and the impact they have on residents.
- Review options for summer storage offerings.
- Continually review the funds set aside for facilities projects to ensure they are being allocated effectively and align with strategic goals.

5.3 Ensure safe and efficient residence hall information desk and mail services operations.

- Implement ongoing training programs for student and security contract information desk staff.
- Regularly review and update desk operation procedures for student and security contract information desk staff.
- Execute a smooth security contract transition between companies to minimize any negative impact on the resident experience.
- Review the feasibility of centralizing mail services to one location, potentially in the upcoming West Grace Street Housing Project.
- Explore and implement advanced package management solutions, such as automated locker systems or text message notifications, to streamline the process of receiving and distributing mail and packages.



INITIATIVES SEQUENCING MATRIX

Legend: ■ Planning ■ Implementation ■ Assessment

	2024		2025		2026		2027		2028	
Initiative	July - Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.	
Resident-Centered Living Experience										
Foster Sense of Belonging & Community	■		■	■	■		■			
Enhance Living and Learning Experiences			■	■	■		■		■	
Staff Development & Leadership										
Enhance Staff Communication & Connection		■	■	■	■		■	■		
Improve Professional Staff Engagement			■	■	■	■	■		■	
Provide Professional Development Opportunities			■	■	■	■	■			
Ensure Equitable Workloads & Compensation		■	■	■	■		■			
Boost Staff Morale & Recognition		■	■	■	■		■			
Inclusive Excellence & Belonging										
Support Diverse Student Identities & Needs	■	■	■	■	■					
Integrate DEI Principles		■	■	■	■		■			
Operational Integrity & Resource Management										
Improve Campus & Community Collaboration					■	■	■	■		■
Increase Transparency in Decision-Making Processes			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Foster Innovation in Operational Processes				■	■	■	■	■		
Facility Innovation & Safety										
Increase Resident Engagement & Sense of Belonging			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Improve Quality of Housing							■	■	■	
Ensure Safe & Efficient Operations					■	■	■	■	■	



VCU Division of
Student Affairs

Residential Life and Housing

