



# Leading with Purpose, Partnership, and Impact

Our Strategic Priorities

**Spartans Will. ENGAGE.**



**SUPPORTS** the university | **FOSTERS** public access | **ADVOCATES** engaged scholarship





Dear Colleagues,

Michigan State University's commitments as a land-grant institution are deeply rooted in a tradition of public engagement that continues to advance our mission to educate students, foster their success, and catalyze groundbreaking discoveries. University Outreach and Engagement (UOE) plays a vital role in accelerating these efforts – by convening community and academic partners to address pressing societal challenges, translating research into practical applications, and creating hands-on opportunities for engaged scholarship and learning.

Through a broad and diverse range of partnerships, UOE helps strengthen student success, amplify faculty research and its impact, and foster collaborations that benefit Michigan and beyond. As Spartans, we remain committed to contributing to the public good while driving excellence across campus and more broadly in ways that generate lasting impact.

Rooted in tradition, yet forward thinking in accelerating the impact of our Spartans through talent activation and

community engagement – UOE embodies the essence and ethos of our land-grant mission. With its orientation toward the future, an eye toward innovative engagement models, and community-centered collaboration approaches, I am excited about the vision, mission, and goals outlined in UOE's strategic plan. It builds on a long tradition of engaged scholarship at MSU that identifies opportunities for collaboration with our faculty, staff, and students – as well as across the state of Michigan, the nation, and the world.

I encourage you to embrace the vision and goals of the plan, and to engage in opportunities with UOE to find synergies that will continue to move us forward as One Team toward our shared engagement aspirations.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Lee McIntyre".

**Laura Lee McIntyre, Ph.D.**

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Michigan State University



Dear Colleagues,

University Outreach and Engagement is pleased to share this strategic plan with the Michigan State University community—on campus, across Michigan, and beyond. Our planning process began with three central questions: How well are we fulfilling the mission the university has entrusted to us? How can we innovate and strengthen partnerships to enhance MSU's public engagement and scholarly impact? And how can we build a workplace that enables our centers, institutes, and offices to achieve shared goals?

To answer these questions, we engaged administrators, faculty, staff, students, community members, and partners. Their insights affirmed the strong value UOE brings to advancing MSU's engagement and research mission. We also heard that MSU continues to be respected for its contributions to the well-being and vitality of communities throughout Michigan and beyond.

Equally important, we learned that communities are eager to collaborate with MSU to address today's most pressing challenges. These perspectives helped shape the strategic priorities outlined in this plan and strengthened our optimism about the work ahead.

We invite you to read, reflect, and imagine new possibilities with us. Together, we can continue advancing the public good and deepening MSU's commitment to meaningful engagement.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kwesi Brookins".

**Kwesi Brookins, Ph.D.**

Vice Provost for University Outreach and Engagement  
Michigan State University



A 21st-century land-grant university's public mission demands a bold reassertion.

At Michigan State University, engaged scholarship, learning, outreach, and service are key to making a compelling case for the societal value of higher education.

We present this report to publicly articulate our priorities and to reinforce MSU's public mission and value.

## About UOE

Michigan State University's Office of University Outreach and Engagement (UOE) is an academic support unit with a strong emphasis on convening community and academic partners in mutually beneficial ways to address pressing societal challenges. UOE advances MSU's land-grant mission by translating research into practical applications, helping faculty and students build strong community partnerships, and creating meaningful, hands-on opportunities for engaged scholarship. UOE helps faculty, staff, and students in every college, institute, and center to partner with communities through scholarship and community-engaged learning that are collaborative, participatory, and transformative.

UOE's structure includes departments that span academic research, student and faculty learning, and community development. These units work independently and collaboratively to foster engagement with internal and external partners and interest holders that is systemic, empowering, and grounded in scholarship.

UOE works in partnership with academic and administrative units, including MSU's colleges, MSU Extension, International Studies and Programs, Undergraduate Education, Research and Innovation, and others to grow and sustain a unified, university-wide engagement infrastructure. We are informed by and responsive to the needs of MSU's colleges and other units, including faculty, students, and staff.



See descriptions of all UOE departments at: [engage.msu.edu/about/departments](https://engage.msu.edu/about/departments)

## Background

MSU's commitment to outreach evolved in the mid-1980s, with a major shift toward integrating engagement as a core academic mission, catalyzed by a 1988 Kellogg Foundation grant. Over the following decades, UOE expanded its scope, added key programs and institutes, and developed tools, conferences, and recognitions to advance community-university partnerships and the scholarship of engagement. Today, UOE serves as a central hub for strategic engagement across Michigan and beyond.

## UOE's Vision

To position MSU as a premier engaged research university that exemplifies the importance and value of community-university partnerships in scholarship and learning.

## UOE's Mission and Values

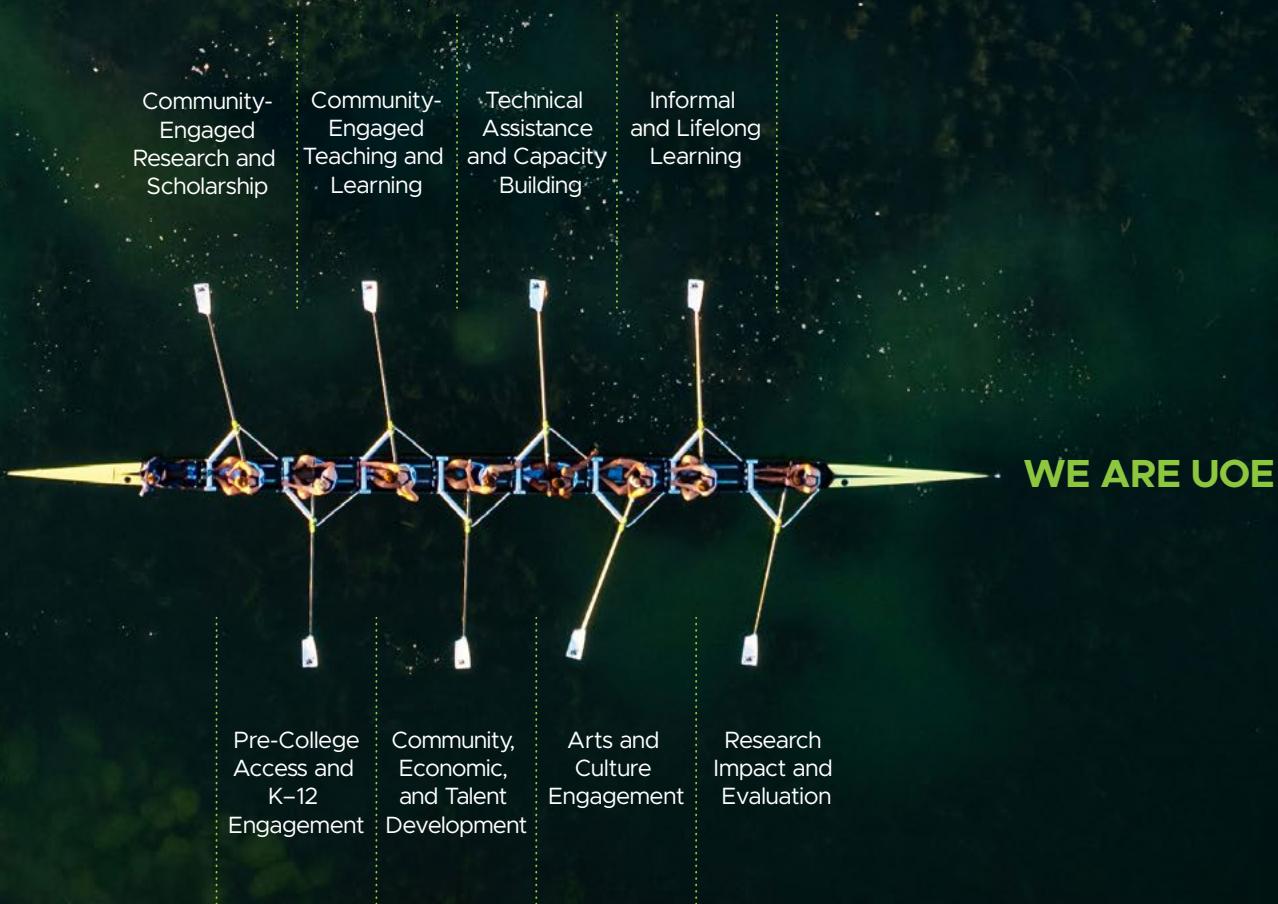
MSU works *with* communities to produce practical solutions and lasting benefits in Michigan and beyond. We facilitate university-wide efforts to create an ecosystem of engagement by:

- supporting faculty, staff, and students in engaged scholarship and learning across all scholarly disciplines and areas for societal impact;
- fostering public access to university expertise and resources; and
- advocating for exemplary engaged scholarship, nationally and internationally.

In all its work, UOE emphasizes university-community partnerships that are *collaborative, participatory, empowering, systemic, transformative, sustainable, and anchored in scholarship*.

## UOE's Pathways to Engagement

UOE supports community-university partnerships with a variety of goals across all academic disciplines, such as creating enriching educational experiences for youth and families, facilitating engaged learning that enhances student success, and promoting long-term and reciprocal research relationships. UOE's major pathways for engagement include:



## UOE's Strategic Priorities Align with MSU 2030

In the following pages, we outline four pillars that will anchor UOE's efforts over the next 5 years, concluding with cross-cutting themes that span all four areas of strategic effort. These priorities align with MSU 2030: Excellence for Global Impact, the university's strategic plan, by:

- elevating student success through engaged learning and career pathways, growing talent for Michigan and beyond;
- advancing interdisciplinary research that delivers strong societal benefit;
- increasing proactive engagement with communities based on partnerships informed by shared goals and mutual learning, building community together; and
- stewarding our human and financial resources to continuously improve services and supports for MSU students, faculty, staff, and community partners.

## Definitions and Terms

**Community-university partnerships:** Relationships rooted in reciprocity and mutual benefit between community-based individuals/organizations and university-based faculty, students, and staff.

**Engaged research university:** A university that works with communities to do research that solves problems and improves everyday life.

**Engaged scholarship:** Evidence-based work with community partners—research, creative projects, teaching and learning, and service—undertaken with intent and respect to create practical, sustainable societal benefits and publishable scholarly outcomes.

**Transdisciplinary scholarship:** Research, creative practice, and teaching that bring together experts from different fields and community partners to work together—beyond any single discipline—to generate knowledge that solves real-world problems.



# UOE Goals

## Core and Strategic Priorities

### Pillar 1

#### External Partnerships and Engagement

UOE is committed to building strategic community partnerships, facilitating learning and scholarship, and supporting place-based initiatives. UOE will convene community and university partners to collaboratively produce scholarship, strengthen capacity, and catalyze interdisciplinary networks that address societal challenges and transform lives.

To meet this goal, UOE plans to:

##### Core Priorities:

- Strengthen partnerships in key areas of university outreach and engagement, including but not limited to research and evaluation, arts and culture, pre-college and K-12 engagement, Tribal nations, and global engagement, which are responsive to emerging internal and external opportunities.
- Provide leadership to identify, develop, and share information internally and externally about university structures and resources that support community-engaged scholarship and community-university partnerships.
- Create and enhance sustainable institutional systems and supports for building and managing external partnerships.
- Co-create and implement reciprocal and mutually beneficial place-based partnerships.



## **Strategic Priorities:**

- Establish an Engagement Innovation Lab that connects faculty, staff, and students in partnerships that support external funding competitiveness, deliver practical and publishable results, and align with community-articulated priorities for research and learning.
- In partnership with MSU units, explore the feasibility of launching an incubator funding program that centers community-articulated research priorities and fosters opportunities to secure external funding.
- Modernize and reframe the strategic relationship between MSU Extension and University Outreach and Engagement to define missions and purpose, identify opportunities, and model progressive land-grant approaches to strengthen collaboration with university and community partners.
- Support the Office of the President's Roadmap strategy on local and regional engagement that leverages MSU's strengths.

Initiatives that build upon existing MSU strengths include:

- an established presence in Detroit (MSU Detroit Center) and Lansing (Center for Community and Economic Development);
- a culture of co-created scholarship across MSU colleges, centers, and institutes; and
- existing university-wide strategic priorities, including but not limited to the Green and White Council, Student Success initiatives, and the Future of Health partnership with Henry Ford Health and the Detroit Pistons.

By the end of Year 1 of implementation, we hope to have:

- supported the Office of the President in releasing and establishing next steps for a Roadmap for Local and Regional Engagement;
- launched at least one Engagement Innovation Lab centered on community-articulated priorities; established appropriate questions and procedures to study the efficacy of support models; and
- released shared collaborative guidance with MSU Extension on alignment, mission, and core service areas; identified collaborative opportunities to work with community and university partners.

By cultivating programs, scholarship, and shared resources through these priorities, UOE serves as a vital convener and connector, driving responsive and impactful community-university partnerships that align with MSU's land-grant mission.

# UOE Goals

## Core and Strategic Priorities

### Pillar 2

#### Excellence in Engaged Scholarship and Learning

MSU has been a recognized leader in engaged scholarship for decades. We will foster professional development, institutional leadership, supportive policies, and a culture that enables ethical, respectful, and impactful engagement across disciplines, units, and roles.

To meet this goal, UOE plans to:

##### Core Priorities:

- Provide professional development and learning opportunities for faculty, academic staff, and administrators to help them succeed as community-engaged scholars and practitioners.
- Support undergraduate and graduate students' community-engaged learning, bolster their success, and illuminate career pathways that contribute to public life.
- Provide MSU leadership for national and international community engagement organizations and leading journals.
- Continue to develop leading-edge tools and resources that advance MSU leadership in the scholarship of outreach and engagement.



### **Strategic Priorities:**

- Initiate a UOE faculty/academic staff affiliates program to support scholarly success, excellence, and impact.
- Partner with colleges and units to align engaged research priorities, share resources, and coordinate across units to amplify engagement and impact.
- Work with Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs and campus leadership to strengthen promotion and tenure processes that recognize and reward community-engaged, participatory, and transdisciplinary scholarship.
- Establish a cross-university initiative that advances global engagement.

Initiatives that build upon existing MSU strengths include:

- MSU's designation as No. 1 in the nation for service-learning (U.S. News and World Report rankings), led by the Center for Community Engaged Learning.
- Activities supporting MSU's classification as a Carnegie Community Engagement university and its designation by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities as an Innovation and Economic Prosperity institution.

By the end of Year 1 of implementation, we hope to have:

- co-led a working group on community engagement, innovation, and entrepreneurship to reexamine promotion and tenure recommendations; explored guides and consultation services to support discipline-specific implementation;
- scoped the faculty affiliates program and prepared for launch; and
- re-envisioned and prepared for relaunch of one or more advisory council structures to align UOE and cross-campus efforts.

UOE advances excellence in community-engaged scholarship and practice by supporting professional development for faculty, staff, students, and administrators across disciplines. This work ensures that students, faculty, and staff are equipped to engage ethically, respectfully, and effectively with communities; that MSU's institutional policies and culture fully support and reward engaged scholarship; and that MSU is recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in advancing the theory and practice of engaged scholarship.

# UOE Goals

## Core and Strategic Priorities

### Pillar 3

#### Communicating the Outreach and Engagement Story

UOE will demonstrate how MSU and communities work together to create change—and help that work reach more people. We will promote programs, spotlight engaged scholars, measure results, and share compelling stories, opening MSU's resources to the public and positioning MSU as a national leader in community engagement.

To meet this goal, UOE plans to:

##### Core Priorities:

- Promote UOE outreach and engagement programs, including faculty and professional development opportunities, an awards program, and publications. Foster strategic partnerships with MSU communications professionals to broaden reach.
- Host large-scale outreach events and websites that create greater access to the university's resources.
- Collect, analyze, and share institution data about the community engagement activities of and impacts on community partners, students, staff, and faculty.
- Publish stories about MSU scholars from across colleges and disciplines demonstrating MSU's impact in Michigan communities and globally through collaborative innovation and scholarly partnerships.



## **Strategic Priorities:**

- Develop a unified strategy and support structure for coordinating communications across all departments to create greater awareness about UOE within and beyond the university.
- Assess the effectiveness of UOE communications and review different approaches and strategies that might be more effective for broadening UOE's reach.
- Publish and share an annual outreach and engagement report and the Spartan Public Engagement Map that showcase UOE and MSU accomplishments, partnerships, and impacts.

Initiatives that build upon existing MSU strengths include:

- award-winning data strategies that support resources like the Spartan Public Engagement Map;
- partnership between UOE's Communication and Information Technology and University Communications and Marketing; and
- impact evaluation and assessment expertise both within UOE and across other units.

By the end of Year 1 of implementation, we hope to have:

- a sustainable funding and staffing model to support the Spartan Public Engagement Map, including expanding data representation and ensuring regularly updated data; and
- a strategic and coordinated communication strategy and staffing model across UOE.

UOE's communications aim to foster a culture of engagement on campus by telling stories of engagement, promoting access to MSU's resources to the public, and advocating for exemplary engaged scholarship that leads to positive community impacts.

# UOE Goals

## Core and Strategic Priorities

### Pillar 4

#### Organizational Excellence

To foster excellence, we will build a thriving, inclusive structure and culture within UOE where collaboration, trust, and professional growth are core to how we work together. We will prioritize cross-unit alignment, supportive infrastructure, and intentional investments in people, systems, and practices that enable excellence.

To meet this goal, UOE plans to:

##### Core Priorities:

- Strengthen UOE-wide budget, HR, and operational support systems by standardizing key practices and establishing shared service models for budgeting, HR, data, and communications to ensure fairness, resource-sharing, and cross-unit collaboration.
- Redouble efforts to promote cross-unit understanding of UOE identity and purpose, including shared definitions, frameworks, and pathways to impact.
- Refine the annual planning, reporting, and performance evaluation processes to be more consistent across all units in UOE, facilitating greater collaboration and reducing duplicate efforts.
- Continuously improve internal communication mechanisms and information-sharing platforms.



## **Strategic Priorities:**

- Develop a UOE-wide professional development framework aligned with shared competencies that include supporting partnerships, cultural humility, facilitation, co-creation, securing funding, managing projects, and providing exemplary service.
- Establish, resource, and support a culture and climate committee representing all UOE units, focusing on supporting a healthy workplace policy/culture, sponsoring peer recognitions, and building strong social ties.
- Collaborate with UOE administrators and staff to develop, implement, and evaluate an internal Employee Handbook to standardize our “internal rules of the road.”
- Develop and launch a transformative plan to catalyze external funding and resources, empowering UOE programs to thrive and shape a far better future.

Initiatives that build upon existing MSU strengths include:

- MSU 2030’s focus on achieving next-generation operations and organization;
- MSU’s commitment to faculty and staff development through the Tuition Benefit and Educational Assistance Programs; and
- learning and development programs offered through Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs.

By the end of Year 1 of implementation, we hope to have:

- charged and organized the committees to co-create UOE’s standard operating procedures and guidelines in the Employee Handbook;
- scoped and formed a standing culture and climate committee; and
- developed and launched pilots seeking external funding and resources to build and sustain UOE programs and initiatives.

By investing in people, systems, and collaboration, this pillar strengthens our capacity to deliver on all other pillars for positive external impact—and makes UOE a great place to work.

# Our Commitment

Across all four pillars, several shared priorities define UOE's vision for the years ahead. These include:

- **Strengthening Partnerships and Collaboration:** UOE's role as a connector and convener is foundational. All pillars emphasize the importance of forming, sustaining, and enhancing partnerships—both externally (with communities, schools, and governments) and internally (across MSU units, colleges, and departments).
- **Advancing Engaged Scholarship:** Each pillar affirms UOE's commitment to advancing engaged research, creative activity, teaching and learning, and service, and integrating scholarship into practice across disciplines.
- **Building Institutional Capacity and Infrastructure:** Multiple pillars articulate how UOE will collaborate with MSU partners and work independently to build and strengthen infrastructure that makes community engagement more feasible, visible, and sustainable.
- **Coordinating and Aligning Efforts Across Units:** Several pillars highlight how UOE, as a backbone organization for engagement at MSU, will foster coherence across units, reduce duplication, and align tools, activities, and language to support a unified institutional approach.

We aspire for UOE to have a coherent internal structure and strong, measurable external impact, supporting and reinforcing MSU's national leadership in engaged scholarship and community-university partnerships. We envision a university in which all engaged scholars, students, and staff are supported and celebrated, and in which our collaborations with communities are strategic, sustained, and transformative.

We invite you to engage with us in this shared work. Whether you are a faculty member seeking support for community-based research, a partner organization looking to collaborate, a student preparing for lifelong community engagement and scholarship, or a campus leader aiming to embed engagement in your unit's goals, UOE is here to connect, support, and collaborate. Together, we will demonstrate what it means for a land-grant university to lead with purpose, partnership, and impact.



# Specific Alignments with MSU 2030 Strategic Priorities

UEOE PILLARS	MSU 2030 Strategic Priorities						
	Student Success	Staff and Faculty Success	Discovery and Innovation for Impact	Sustainable Health	Stewardship for a Sustainable Future	Access, Opportunity and Excellence	Cross-Cutting Themes
1. External Partnerships and Engagement	Obj. 1 Obj. 4		Obj. 1 Obj. 2 Obj. 3	Obj. 3 Obj. 4		Obj. 1 Obj. 5	• Build Community • Grow Talent
2. Excellence in Engaged Scholarship and Learning	Obj. 1 Obj. 4 Obj. 5	Obj. 2	Obj. 1			Obj. 5	• Build Community • Grow Talent
3. Communicating the Outreach and Engagement Story		Obj. 2 Obj. 3				Obj. 5	
4. Organizational Excellence		Obj. 2			Obj. 1	Obj. 3	• Next Generation

## Acknowledgments

Special thanks to **Spartina Consulting** for their valuable insights and expertise in facilitating conversations to shape our priorities and goals. We also deeply appreciate the many members of the MSU community who strengthened this material with thoughtful feedback.

We gratefully recognize the contributions of the **Strategic Planning Committee**, who made this report possible:

Stephanie Anthony

Burton Bargerstock

Jena Baker-Calloway

Jessica Barnes-Najor

Robert Brown

C. Kurt Dewhurst

Diane Doberneck

Ghada Georgis

Paulo Gordillo

Rex LaMore

Kevin Leonard

Miles McNall

John Melcher

Susan Sheth

Kathleen Smith

Francisco Villarruel

Arnold Weinfeld

Renee Miller Zientek

Mary ZumBrunnen

## Co-chairs of the Strategic Planning Committee:

Elyse Aurbach, Kwesi Brookins, and Arnold Weinfeld



# Spartans Will. ENGAGE.

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

University Outreach  
and Engagement

[engage.msu.edu](http://engage.msu.edu)