

2008-2013 Strategic Plan Institute for the Environment UNC-Chapel Hill

Vision

The Institute for the Environment (IE) of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will be recognized worldwide for the quality and impact of its research, scholarship and engagement. IE will set the standard for the creation and dissemination of knowledge in service to local communities and the people of North Carolina, the nation and the world.

Mission

To realize its vision the IE catalyzes and advances interdisciplinary environmental research to solve local to global challenges, educates the next generation of leaders committed to the health and stewardship of our planet, and informs and engages the public to enable environmental problem solving.

IE seeks solutions to critical environmental issues – including those related to water resources, public health, energy, climate change, air quality, land-use change, and biodiversity – to enable sustainable human communities and their coexistence with natural systems.

Strategies

To carry out the mission that achieves the vision, five core strategies will be pursued.

Strategy 1: *Coordinate existing research strengths, identify long-term needs, and make strategic investments that respond to critical emerging environmental issues.*

- 1a. Develop focal areas of research through establishment and support of topical centers within the Institute.
- 1b. Analyze environmental challenges in North Carolina, nationally and globally, assess how they align with UNC-CH expertise, and target key challenges as foci of IE research and analysis.

Strategy 2: *Develop a research infrastructure to catalyze interdisciplinary initiatives through allocation of research space, contribution of faculty and staff time, and strategic investment of seed money.*

- 2a. Secure dedicated IE space with designated footprint(s) for interdisciplinary activities in research, engagement, and education, in collaboration with participating units of the campus, the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development and the Vice Chancellor for Public Service and Engagement.
- 2b. Expand research support capabilities by providing research space and facilities, contract and grant administration, seed money for strategic research initiatives, and staff support for IE faculty and programs.

Strategy 3: *Design, fund and implement an environmental synthesis program around interdisciplinary, problem-oriented research that serves to stimulate research collaboration, promote engagement with public and private partners, and develop unique educational opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.*

- 3a. Develop a mechanism for identifying priority, interdisciplinary environmental problems, that will attract collaboration of faculty and students in multiple units on campus, as well as key off-campus groups.
- 3b. Raise funds to support the synthesis program, including building an endowment to support faculty and student collaboration.
- 3c. Establish rotating faculty positions, jointly sponsored by IE and academic departments, and appoint an initial cohort.
- 3d. Seek funds to catalyze and nurture research collaboration in emerging areas.

Strategy 4: Enhance, enrich and expand environmental education, particularly by providing students with experiential opportunities.

- 4a. Provide capstone courses, field site programs, research opportunities, internships, professional development activities and specialized advising to undergraduate students, particularly those in the Curriculum for the Environment and Ecology.
- 4b. Stimulate development of interdisciplinary graduate programs linked to IE research.
- 4c. Build endowment for undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships.

Strategy 5: Develop research-driven outreach and service activities that engage off-campus audiences in environmental education and problem-solving across North Carolina, the nation and the world.

- 5a. Develop highly-visible, relevant, externally-funded outreach activities for each Center.
- 5b. Cultivate strategic partnerships with other science outreach/education programs on the UNC-CH campus and on other UNC system campuses.
- 5c. Develop the capability to provide policy analysis for local governments, state agencies and legislative staff, and to respond to identified research needs.
- 5d. Raise funds to support a small team of professors-of-the-practice to participate in engagement activities, as well as collaborate in research programs and teaching activities.