



Strategic Plan 2024-2028

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide innovative research, education, and clinical care in a culture of excellence, discovery, and scholarship to the next generation of physicians, scientists, and educators to advance patient-centered and equitable healthcare.

Vision Statement

We envision a thriving community of medical educators, researchers, and physicians who advance high-quality, innovative, and reliable health care for all.

Strategic Goals:

- Education and Academic Excellence
- Research and Discovery
- Staff and Faculty Success
- University & Community Relations

Education and Academic Excellence

The Whiddon COM has made significant strides to bolster support for learners and to ensure all students are positioned to succeed at the University of South Alabama. Over the next four years, Whiddon COM will continue to advance its educational mission by using student and curricular data and outcomes to help prioritize and drive performance across all its educational and support programs. With learning as a constant, Whiddon COM will find new pathways to increase exposure to students beyond the traditional classroom, expand student access to supportive experiences and programming, and define incentives to encourage more faculty to participate in teaching and learning.

Strategic Goal 1: Develop an integrated educational model for the College that uses evidence-based decision-making to support student success

Outcomes:

- 1.1** Strengthen and infuse the educational programs with basic science and clinical experiences and greater exposure to health system and research system science.
- 1.2** Expand learner access to supportive experiences and programming for research.
- 1.3** Define incentives and policies to encourage faculty participation in teaching and learning support programs (mentoring, coaching, advising, etc.).
- 1.4** Pursue greater standardization across programs for monitoring and assessing educational outcomes, pedagogical methods, and student support.
- 1.5** Expand infrastructure and data on learner performance and outcomes to drive integration and continuous improvement.
- 1.6** Create individualized experiences and programming (e.g., research track) to support learner education and success.

Research and Discovery

In advance of the new medical school building featuring state-of-the-art research facilities, Whiddon COM is at the ideal juncture to grow its research mission, with the goal of being recognized as a leader in academic research. Through investments in faculty, staff, and research infrastructure, and by cultivating a collaborative environment driven by curiosity and a passion for transforming research discovery into healthcare innovations, we will expand and strengthen our capacity to generate high-impact biomedical research for the benefit of the patients we serve.

Strategic Goal 2: Increase nationally and internationally recognized research and scholarship through targeted focus on people, organizational structure, resources, and infrastructure.

Outcomes:

2.1 Identify existing or potential areas of strength for research growth in alignment with regional and national healthcare needs, and establish new Centers of Excellence in each area via cluster hires and resource allocation.

2.2 Increase the number of faculty performing research.

2.3 Increase the number of trainees in biomedical research.

2.4 Provide tailored support for faculty to obtain extramural funding.

2.5 Enhance the research environment and infrastructure.

Staff and Faculty Success

Whiddon COM is committed to creating a culture that clearly communicates and reinforces the importance of dedicated, high-quality employees to the college's success. Over the next four years, we will review and develop structures and supports for professional collaboration and mentoring to instill team-based approaches to collaborative problem solving among employee and reward and celebrate both individual and collective employee contributions that enhance COM's reputation and standing.

Strategic Goal 3: Strengthen employee recruitment, satisfaction, and retention, including pathways for professional growth and career advancement.

Outcomes:

- 3.1** Revise internal policies and practices to support a culture of belonging and employee mental health and wellness.
- 3.2** Standardize systems for faculty and employee onboarding and ongoing support.
- 3.3** Evaluate the policies for faculty promotion and tenure, including centralized policies and metrics around productivity and measurement of faculty contributions.
- 3.4** Encourage career development for all through expanded access to professional learning and networking opportunities (e.g., professional development on evidenced-based educational practices, Healthcare Leadership Certificate).

University & Community Relations

As a medical school deeply connected to our own health systems and those across Mobile and the Gulf Coast, our trainees, faculty, and researchers are integral to our community and the state. Over the next four years, we will continue to support and find alignment with USA Health to meet its growth and quality targets, further leverage our assets inside and outside of the clinical setting to advance community health, and work in partnership with our University and college and community partners to increase our impact on the community.

Strategic Goal 4: Enhance connections between the College of Medicine, the University, and the USA Health System to advance medical knowledge and care.

Outcomes:

4.1 Identify and pursue clinical research opportunities that align with Whiddon COM's research strengths, health system goals, and patient need.

4.2 Reestablish the Center for Healthy Communities as the lead entity for coordinating community education, research, public service, and health activities.

4.3 Identify opportunities to collaborate with other colleges and departments in health-related fields (e.g., Allied Health and the College of Nursing).

4.4 Enhance options for professional and research-linked collaboration with other academic departments (e.g., Science, Engineering, Business).

4.5 Promote and support joint University bridge programs that enhance the education and research mission of the College and University.

4.6 Continue to share success in research and the educational impact of Whiddon COM with the community.