Neag School of Education Academic Plan
Strengths, Opportunities, and Metrics

Prepared by the Neag School of Education Strategic Planning Committee in Consultation with Neag School of Education Faculty and Staff

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Context

In 2011, President Obama stated that education equity is “the civil rights issue of our time,” and set in motion several federally and privately funded efforts to reinvent public education from kindergarten through college and to significantly improve education access and outcomes for all. One year later, Governor Malloy named 2012 The Year of Education Reform and crafted comprehensive legislation intended to address education inequities in our state, to bolster efforts to rethink public education for the 21st century, and to strengthen the relationship between education and the state’s economic future. Consistent with both the President’s and the Governor’s visions and actions aimed at redefining PreK-12 education, the Neag faculty and administration have set course toward an innovative shift in how we think about and prepare future educators. We envision a realigned Neag School of Education that engages its many strengths in new and innovative ways to promote marked improvements in student educational access and outcomes. Our newly conceptualized school-wide focus on diversity, equity and access, and global and public engagement is strongly aligned with both the national and state imperatives, as well as key UConn initiatives such as Next Gen Connecticut and UConn Tech Park.

At the national level, groups such as the National Academy of Science, the National Academy of Engineering, the National Research Council\(^1\), and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills\(^2\) have stressed the importance of STEM education in preparing students for a world that is being transformed by advances in science and technology. Moreover, they emphasize development of

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\(^1\) *Preparing for the 21st Century: The Education Imperative*

\(^2\) *Partnership for 21st Century Skills*
skills in critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, with an emphasis on enabling transdisciplinary teams to address global challenges and for individuals to make informed decisions about personal and societal issues. New standards for PreK-12 and higher education seek to re-conceptualize education to meet the needs of the 21st century workforce and to secure the nation’s economic future. Efforts to transform public education must include focused work on closing the achievement gap in U.S. public schools by addressing serious issues of equity and access and on closing the global achievement gap between U.S. students and students in other countries whose academic performance is higher.

The process of education reform requires deep transdisciplinary collaboration among educators, policy makers, researchers, and stakeholders across multiple fields to establish the policies, funding streams, and evidence-based practices that will promote achievement of state and national education goals. The extensive change we seek will take years of coordinated work through which we can simultaneously implement change, study its effectiveness, and share it widely in ways that have lasting impact.

The Neag School of Education, ranked #28 by US News and World Report, is uniquely positioned not only to meet this challenge, but to lead efforts that will have state, national, and global influence. Under President Herbst’s hiring initiative, we were able to hire 17 new faculty with expertise in school change, education equity and access, large scale measurement and evaluation, STEM education, and educator preparation. These new, nationally-recognized faculty join a number of award-winning researchers in our school, bringing new perspectives that complement our existing faculty’s far-reaching expertise in these areas. Building on our strong track record of obtaining external funding for research in underperforming schools and with under-represented populations will ensure we have the resources needed to address the challenges effectively.

The Neag School is widely-known and well-respected for its professional education programs across all our departments. We specialize in preparing highly sought-after educators, administrators, sport professionals, and researchers who not only meet the highest standards for licensure but who have the skills to conduct rigorous inquiry, implement high-quality programs, and lead change. As a school we understand what it takes to prepare the next generation of professionals for education and sport fields. Our programs are distinctive for their high levels of student engagement, service learning, and clinical experiences. Our faculty is recognized consistently for their high-quality teaching and advising, an important component of professional education programs.

We were nationally recognized by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education in 2011 for our school-university partnerships. We collaborate intensively with a large number of schools and districts in Connecticut that provide not only clinical learning venues for our students but research and program implementation sites as well. Our nationally-recognized National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented and OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support have engaged thousands of teachers and administrators in optimizing their classrooms and schools for student learning and achievement. In 2013 we are growing a number of global partnerships that will extend our outreach internationally.

The Neag School’s newly formulated teaching, research, and outreach mission is well-aligned with the university’s academic vision. We see many opportunities for external funding, research, and collaboration. As we work together to advance the university’s mission, we put forward four areas of research strength and opportunity that position our school to play a leadership role in our university, the state of Connecticut, the nation, and the world.
Each of these areas will be discussed in detail, providing a rationale, an overall vision, strengths, and opportunities.

**Major area of focus:** Equity and Social Justice

Today’s educators have a responsibility to prepare tomorrow’s adults to be productive, socially conscientious, and well-adjusted citizens in a global environment. Empowering all children via education to reach their full potential has many benefits: greater life opportunities, enriched global intellectual climate, stronger socio-economic fabric of states and nations, and cultivation of talents in all facets of society. Yet, by 2020, “two-thirds of the world’s population and three-quarters of the global workforce will be comprised of disenfranchised and underprivileged populations.”3 Locally, Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the U.S. between low-income and non-low-income students. Universities have an important role to play in addressing the educational inequities that many children experience; that role includes identifying potential strategies for success, developing innovative

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solutions aimed at enhancing educational outcomes, and researching the results of implementation.

The Neag School of Education’s aim is (a) to contribute to the evidence base of sound educational policies, practices, and programs that optimize all students’ potential and (b) to identify proven methods to promote educational equity and social justice. Our applied research will identify how various strategies are used in the field and create resources to assist in replicating selected methods in curricula, policies, practices, and funding decisions in Connecticut and nationwide.

Successful education of children and youth is a complex problem involving many areas of study—early childhood, child health, family studies, social work, urban studies, psychology, public policy, economics, and others. Faculty from all of our departments, particularly the new cadre of faculty hired for the Education Equity, Achievement, and Reform cluster as well as the Education Evaluation and Policy cluster, will join with faculty from other schools and colleges to develop a comprehensive approach and create metrics to assess education equity and student achievement in ways that promote a greater understanding of and ability to predict what influences achievement gaps. Identifying the factors and forces that contribute to these gaps will suggest key levers of change.

**Neag School of Education Strengths in Equity and Social Justice:***

- Over 40 funded projects, for a total of over $26.6 million in extramural funding in the last five years, support education and training, program implementation, and research on public schooling, school improvement, equity, and strengthening under-performing schools.
- Substantial private funding, secured through the UConn Foundation and totaling over $1.4 million in the last three years from national foundations, such as the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, the Hearst Foundation, Bank of America Community Foundation, and Balfour Foundation, centers on addressing education equity and access needs. Likewise, generous individual donors have committed substantial funds to improving student learning, particularly in urban settings.
- Education Equity, Achievement, and Reform cluster hires bring extensive expertise and recognized scholarship to address equity and social justice issues; new faculty join a large number of current faculty who share research expertise in school reform, education policy, measurement and evaluation, large scale quantitative data analysis, teacher education, literacy, bilingual education, special education, applied school research, and policy implementation—all areas that relate directly to equity and social justice in schools.
- The newly hired Education Evaluation and Policy cluster faculty join the Center for Education Policy Analysis faculty to add to our extensive expertise in policy development, implementation, and analysis, with a focus on urban school reform.
- We have strong graduate programs in educational leadership; bilingual education; special education; teacher preparation; measurement, evaluation and assessment; gifted and talented education; and educational technology.
- We have a significant number of school-based outreach programs in urban settings, including HuskySport, IB/M internships, service learning seminars, school-based research projects, CommPACT, Bassick High School (Bridgeport) CollegeEd Program, and Bulkeley High School (Hartford) Teacher Prep Studies. In 2012-13, specific examples of outreach include the following: Our 5th year students in teacher education logged over 32,000 hours in urban schools last year; nearly 120 undergraduates and
graduate students contributed over 20,000 hours in Hartford school-based programs through HuskySport.

- Equity and social justice emphases are embedded in the work of several of the school’s centers, institutes, and projects. These include the Center for Education Policy Analysis, Center for Behavior Education Research, National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, REALL, CommPACT, and HuskySport.
- Extensive relationships with state policy makers (Educator Preparation Advisory Council, Achievement Gap Task Force, System for Education Evaluation and Development), teacher unions (CEA, AFT-CT), school districts, and consortia allow us to steer policy and practice discussion toward equity issues.
- The Neag School is highly respected by school administrators, school leaders, and state and federal policy makers who provide access to research sites and funding.
- Our strong alumni network in schools in 168 of Connecticut’s 169 towns enhances our access to research and program sites.
- HESA curriculum incorporates content involving diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Our signature programs include equity and social justice curricular components in teacher education, sport management, UC Administrator Preparation Programs, counselor education, and school psychology.
- We have delivered successful online and certificate programs for working teachers and administrators, some with a global student body, for the past ten years and continue to build on our successes with new programs.
- We have extensive engagement with the state’s early childhood assessment program.
- We have a growing group of faculty and students who are committed to and enthusiastic about doing equity and social justice work.
- Our HESA program collaborates with student affairs to enable students to engage in social justice work through cultural centers, community outreach, and residential life.

**Opportunities in Equity and Social Justice:**

- Federal research funds and program funds are available that focus on closing the achievement gap, identifying what works, and building education equity and access. Given our track record with obtaining IES (U.S. Department of Education), NSF, and Connecticut State Department of Education funding, we anticipate high productivity.
- Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the U.S.; issues of education equity in Connecticut led to a lawsuit – Sheff v.O’Neill – that continues to shape policy and practice. Connecticut is a hotbed of education equity issues, providing us with ample opportunities for research, implementation, and policy work. The New England region has a number of post-industrial cities dealing with education equity issues; our faculty have conducted research and implementation studies in large cities across New England.
- Closing the achievement gap is a state priority; the state is engaged in the development of a comprehensive data warehouse that we can access to conduct large scale analysis.
- Opportunities exist to collaborate with Alliance school districts that receive state funding to implement effective practices. We have long-standing working relationships with eight of the Alliance districts (e.g., Hartford and Windham).
- A school-wide focus on education equity and social justice will improve the diversity of the graduate student applicant pool and faculty and staff applications. We anticipate creating a cadre of diverse graduate students and post-docs in policy studies, focused on increasing equity and school improvement.
- Efforts related to this research focus area will result in findings that have national relevance and provide evidence to support school reform efforts nationwide.
• We have opportunities for collaboration across the university with programs and departments also focused on equity and social justice.
• Our teacher education program is poised for a revision that refocuses the curriculum on equity and social justice; the groundwork is done.
• We have an opportunity to have a university-wide impact by expanding courses, projects, and public engagement activities centered on equity and social justice.

Major area of focus: STEM Education

The Obama Administration stands committed to providing students at every level with the skills they need to excel in the high-paid, highly-rewarding fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). That’s why the President launched the Educate to Innovate initiative to move American students from the middle to the top of the pack in science and math achievement over the next decade” (The White House http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/k-12/educate-innovate).

National efforts in STEM education are focused on leveraging private sector support, preparing 100,000 effective STEM teachers in the next ten years, strengthening federal investment in STEM, and ensuring that ALL children have access to strong STEM education and STEM careers. Creating a cohesive, integrated, and research-based public education system (P-20) that prepares students to compete in the pursuit of global competencies is central to the economic competitiveness challenge of the next decade.4

In Connecticut, Bioscience Connecticut will jumpstart Connecticut's economy by generating

4 Partnership for 21st Century Skills
“long term, sustainable economic growth based on bioscience research, innovation, entrepreneurship and commercialization.” This effort has been translated into three high profile UConn efforts that will define the university’s work over the next decade—Next Generation Connecticut, UConn Tech Park, and the collaboration with Jackson Laboratories.

The availability of quality STEM education, pre-school through graduate school, is critical to the success of Connecticut’s and UConn’s efforts to redefine themselves as hubs for STEM research and innovation. To be successful in these research and innovation efforts, UConn must become a nationally recognized innovator in STEM education as well. Nationally, STEM curriculum, standards, and instructional approaches are being redefined to enhance the student educational experience, promote project-based hands-on learning, and ensure that students develop the skills to conduct scientific inquiry, solve problems, and innovate.

UConn and the Neag School of Education have important roles in implementing the changes in P-20 science and mathematics education called for by the national standards. This involves strengthening STEM education from the earliest grades through college. Future teachers of science and mathematics must experience, understand, and develop facility with science, engineering, and mathematical practices across their college careers to be able to leverage these techniques in the preparation of the next generation of STEM-literate citizens at the core of the 21st century workforce. Coordination of efforts to create and implement a challenging, articulated, and seamless STEM curriculum from kindergarten to technical preparation pathways and higher education will require widespread collaborative efforts that include leaders in education, engineering, and the arts and sciences, as well as other stakeholders within and beyond the university. Funding for such collaborative efforts is obtainable, and the university’s infrastructure is in place to support large-scale efforts.

The education of a STEM citizenry and workforce cannot be separated from the challenge of resolving educational inequities so ALL students have the opportunity to become part of this exciting effort, within our state and across the country. The National Research Council has clearly stated that STEM education is an equity issue and has set a national goal to broaden the participation of women and minorities in the STEM-capable workforce. We envision a university-based, state-wide STEM Education Collaborative that can successfully tackle the challenges of innovative, effective STEM Education, along with challenges of equity and access.

**NEAG SCHOOL OF EDUCATION STRENGTHS IN STEM EDUCATION:**

- There is a strong track record of extramural funding for research, program implementation, and professional development in science education and mathematics education, including research that identifies effective science teaching strategies, mathematics teacher leadership development, the promotion of early and middle grades mathematical reasoning and discourse, the use of technology in the science classroom, and teaching math to English language learners. We have obtained over $8.78 million in extramural funding for 15 projects in the last five years.
- Foundation funding, such as the McLeod Fellowship, focused on recruitment and retention in STEM degree programs, creates opportunities.

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5 http://biosciencect.uchc.edu

6 Successful K-12 STEM Education: Identifying Effective Approaches in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (2011) NRC
- We have recognized faculty scholarship in teaching science within the socio-political context, science as inquiry, mathematical reasoning and problem solving, and mathematical discourse.
- We offer highly productive summer programs for professional development of educators; Confratute celebrated its 36th year last summer.
- There is extramural funding for scholarships in mathematics and science education, including the Noyce Scholarships (NSF) and the Weiss Scholarships for recruitment of minority math and science teachers.
- Our school-wide expertise in the preparation of practitioners and administrators is essential to promote STEM learning and mathematics curriculum development.
- Neag’s pre-service and in-service teacher education program is the only program in the state that graduates elementary educators with subject area specialties in math and science.
- We are highly skilled and experienced in the coordination of university programs and research in K-12 schools.
- We have broad experience bridging the school-university gap and sustained long-term partnerships with public schools, including several projects sharing extramural funding with priority districts (e.g., Hartford) for programs such as the Math-Science Partnerships, Teacher Quality Partnerships, and U.S. Department of Education and National Science Foundation projects.
- We have recognized expertise in teaching math and science to linguistically and culturally diverse students.
- Our school counseling program has expertise in closing the opportunity gap within the STEM fields.
- We have international recognition for faculty expertise in teaching in partnership with museums.
- We use our successful history of outreach to education institutions at the local, state, national, and international levels.
- Neag faculty have a strong connection to the Smarter Balanced Assessment consortium that is developing new state and national mathematics assessments for K-12.
- Our faculty are in state and national leadership positions, such as board members of TODOS, Board of Science Education, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Connecticut Council of Leaders of Mathematics, and Associated Teachers of Mathematics in Connecticut.

**Opportunities in STEM Education:**

- Next Generation Connecticut will require a pipeline of well-educated Connecticut high school graduates to enter the university ready to tackle challenging college level work. This can only happen if the university energetically and systematically coordinates efforts with school districts in the development and recruitment of the best and brightest young STEM minds through the highest-quality STEM education system beginning in the earliest grades.
- A state and national shift in rethinking the teaching of science and mathematics as STEM will provide plenty of opportunities for leadership. This shift, captured in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), merges science and engineering practices in the classroom, links to core disciplinary ideas and cross-cutting concepts into an inquiry and problem solving approach, and provides the impetus for in-depth and far-reaching work in revising STEM education.
The state and national adoption of the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics that represent forward thinking on mathematical practices, curriculum, assessment, and math’s central role in STEM education will provide many opportunities for innovation.

There is an opportunity for obtaining federal funding (NSF, IES) for STEM education program development, demonstration projects, and best practices research.

Opportunities exist for seeking Federal/private funding for programs such as 100K in 107 to increase the supply of excellent STEM teachers, the STEM Master Teacher Corps that seeks to elevate and engage a talented squad of existing STEM teachers from across the country in the proliferation of best practices and effective professional development, and the Noyce Scholarships.

We have nationally and internationally recognized faculty expertise in:
- Science education and science literacy
- Math education, math literacy, math leadership
- Learning technologies and online programs
- Global Ed – STEM in the socio-political context
- Museums and schools

We have the potential to refocus secondary science, secondary mathematics, and elementary teacher preparation programs on transdisciplinary STEM teaching and learning to supply the teacher workforce with well-prepared STEM teachers at all grade levels.

UConn Tech Park offers an opportunity to develop a STEM Education Center, similar to those found in the North Carolina Research Triangle (NC Stem Learning Network) or the Massachusetts 128 Corridor, which provides opportunities for teacher professional development and student internships.

The Jackson Labs education partnerships program offers academic year teacher sabbaticals; a content-rich, research-based master’s program for secondary science and mathematics teachers; summer programs for students to conduct biomedical research; and high school internships in bench science (http://education.jax.org ). Jackson Labs Education Director has articulated a desire to replicate the successful Maine-based programs in Connecticut.

Our current research and faculty know-how on teaching English language learners can be used to provide stronger STEM teaching to diverse populations of students.

Continued development of STEM K-12 magnet schools and schools with an engineering focus in Connecticut, including several schools within Neag’s partner districts (East Hartford, Windham, Hartford), will create new opportunities for innovations in STEM education.

We have an opportunity to create a STEM Leadership Certificate Program that will help current science, math, and technology teachers develop the skills for integrating the disciplines into a true STEM approach to teaching and learning.

There are opportunities to engage with STEM faculty (e.g., biologists, chemists, engineers, mathematicians) on campus to consider enriching not only K-12 curriculum, but also 12-16 curriculum, and to coordinate efforts across the transition from high school to college for STEM students.

http://www.100kin10.org
Society advances through innovation. As a species, we develop new and better ideas and methods. This innovation requires a cadre of creativity and problem solving skills that are essential elements for advancement across all disciplines. A survey of 1,500 chief executive officers worldwide identified creativity as the most important leadership quality of the future. “The demand for creativity and creative thinking is increasing and will fuel economies in the future, yet students are less prepared to become innovative thinkers of tomorrow.” Fortunately, these skills can be enhanced and taught.

Creativity and innovation serve as a focus unto themselves, as well as an essential component of “Next Generation Connecticut.” The Neag School of Education brings a unique, interdisciplinary perspective to the Governor Malloy’s challenge to strengthen Connecticut’s ability to attract and sustain a talented workforce in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Innovation in all endeavors requires more than an infusion of capital; innovation also requires a workforce with a willingness to persist in problem-solving and to seek creative and novel solutions. To achieve the high level of innovation necessary to prompt economic development in Connecticut, young people in our state need to encounter interdisciplinary learning opportunities that incorporate creative problem solving in an authentic way as part of the learning process at the University, as well as in K-12 education settings. A different kind of teaching is necessary, one in which the teacher serves as a coach for the development of skills, such as the ability to engage in problem-solving and inquiry.

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8 IBM Global Chief Executive Officer Study
9 Barriers to Creativity in Education
10 Pink, 2006; NSB, 2010; Zhao, 2013
11 Preparing for the 21st Century
There is a movement developing at Research I Universities across the country in which faculty work across disciplines (arts, STEM, business, health care) to foster students’ creative development in ways that will give them the necessary tools for success, particularly in the STEM fields. Leading U.S. research universities are committed to helping equip students and faculty to address the world’s most pressing, complex, and open-ended challenges with creative confidence as well as disciplinary expertise.12

Drawing from the research base, creativity experts from other colleges at the University, and our own faculty with expertise in creativity, pedagogy, and technology, the Neag School of Education is prepared to participate in a strategic plan to promote creative problem solving and innovation across the university. These efforts will encompass faculty members from every discipline on campus and students in every field of study. We believe this idea has potential for (a) enhancing UConn students’ versatility in the face of change, (b) forming a collaborative cohort of cross-discipline faculty researching creativity and innovation, and (c) attracting major donor funding in creativity and innovation. Creativity represents both new criteria and scholastic emphasis that may enhance equity.

**Neag School of Education Strengths in Creativity and Innovation:**

- Neag School of Education recently successfully recruited three internationally recognized experts on creativity and innovation who have experience working with broad audiences (both nationally and internationally) across different disciplines in enhancing creative thinking and experience developing creativity programs in higher education.
- Creativity and its application to real-world problems is the basis of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model. This model is the most widely used model in the world for gifted education and was developed by researchers in the Neag School of Education’s gifted and talented program. This model can be used to enhance creativity training with students across campus.
- Neag School of Education currently offers a graduate course in creativity that reaches enrollment capacity each semester it is offered. We also offer a course in enhancing thinking skills. Our expertise in these areas can be expanded to serve as the basis for online certificates, additional undergraduate and graduate course in creativity and innovation, a possible undergraduate minor, and advanced graduate degrees in creativity and innovation.
- Our gifted and talented program is nationally and internationally recognized for its work in this area.
- Developing and promoting international relationships is a key component to Neag’s vision as well as UConn’s future academic success. Our diversity promotes relationships internationally as well as with domestic institutions of higher education.
- Diversity, culturally and experientially, across the Neag faculty affords a foundation to foster creative development.
- Neag faculty have expertise in Problem Based Learning (PBL), a well-documented instruction approach that scaffolds the development of creative problem solving and innovation. PBL as a delivery method in a STEM population is ripe for development and research.
- Online course development and certificate initiatives are not only a goal, but strengths of the NSoE.

12 Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities
OPPORTUNITIES IN CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION:

- All programs across the Neag School of Education recognize the need to incorporate more creativity and innovative thinking within their programs.
- Various programs across the campus have an interest in creativity and innovation and are conducting research in this area, providing a platform for strong cross-campus collaborations for programming and research. A number of university faculty are well-known researchers in the area.
- Membership on the planning task force for the creation of a university Institute on Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship and membership on the university’s Strategic Area Advisory Team on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship provide us with opportunities to participate in and influence the university’s direction in positive ways.
- Middle Eastern and Asian countries are placing an emphasis on creativity and are seeking assistance in developing creativity within their educational systems, providing potential international program and research sites. Our faculty often advise these countries on their initiatives.
- Campus-wide interest in creativity and innovation is evident in the addition of an Innovation House to UConn’s First Year Programs and Learning Communities.
- Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship is one of the themes identified by the Campus-wide Strategic Planning Committee.
- Industry partners could be a prime funding source for collaborative and research initiatives. Funding for creative proposals that connect disciplines around creativity and innovation could also be funded by NSF programs such as CREATIV.
- The university currently sponsors hundreds of efforts to promote creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship including student programs such as Innovation Quest, courses such as Creativity and Social Change, immersion opportunities such as Innovation House, and organized centers such as the Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. If we were to connect these efforts for the purpose of sharing expertise, we would realize the influence and potential of the wealth of knowledge that exists at our university.
Educator quality is a topic of considerable interest nationwide. Economists try to calculate a teacher’s “value added,” states try to evaluate teacher and administrator “effectiveness,” critics worry about teacher and administrator preparation, practitioners ask for relevant professional development, policymakers strive to create policies for licensure and implement incentives and sanctions to influence the distribution of qualified educators, and parents search for caring teachers who will nurture the whole child. Yet, little consensus exists on what constitutes educator quality and how it should be measured, evaluated, and distributed. Several discussions, in particular, currently dominate the national discourse:

- value-added models for educators and for preparation programs;
- questions about who should prepare teachers and administrators and where and what they should learn, know, and be able to do at initial licensure;
- assessments for determining teacher quality at initial licensure;
• identification of what constitutes effective teaching;
• design and implementation of systems for evaluating educators;
• evidence-based methods for improving teacher performance; and
• influences on teacher retention, particularly in difficult-to-staff schools.

In recent years, the federal government has tied major funding initiatives such as Race to the Top ($4 billion) and major policy initiatives such as No Child Left Behind to states’ implementation changes in teacher preparation, teacher licensure, and teacher evaluation. Likewise, foundations are funding multi-million dollar efforts, such as the Carnegie Corporation’s Teachers for a New Era ($100 million+) and the Gates Foundation’s Measures of Effective Teaching project ($45 million) to produce better research and spawn preparation and evaluation program improvements. The ultimate goal of both federal and private funding is to improve educator effectiveness and thereby to improve student achievement.

In the state of Connecticut, the comprehensive PA 12-116 Act Concerning Education Reform, part of Governor Malloy’s Year of Education initiative, laid out a legislative framework to scaffold the revision of state policies and regulations for educator preparation, credentialing, ongoing professional development, and evaluation. The legislation laid the groundwork for the development of two high profile advisory councils, charged with examination and revision of state policies and regulations. The Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee (PEAC) was established to develop guidelines for evaluating teachers, principals, and educator support specialists. In February 2012, the Connecticut State Board of Education approved the state’s evaluation framework to be translated by PEAC into Connecticut’s System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED). The pilot implementation of SEED was subsequently studied by a team of Neag researcher.

The Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) was established in 2012 to propose principles, guidelines, and regulations for teacher and administrator preparation. Neag faculty and administration are well-represented as members and support staff to the EPAC and its sub-committees and are actively shaping state-level policy and regulation.

Despite numerous policy and program changes being made, the research needed both to learn from and to inform those changes is limited. For instance, despite the furor over questions of the quality of teacher preparation, the research literature remains ambiguous. Similarly, while states and districts have moved to adopt enhanced educator evaluation systems that include student growth or value-added teacher measures and measures derived from elaborated classroom observation schemes, the stability and validity of these measures remain contested. Almost every new policy uses outcome measures of students as indicators of “effectiveness,” yet we know that those measures are both limited in what they assess, and limiting in terms of what children are taught in these contexts. The consequences for both educators and students of attaching ratings and pay incentives to educator effectiveness measures remain unknown. Similarly, while some claim that we know the features of high quality professional development, rigorous research designed to test those “best practices” does not soundly prove their worth.

Educator effectiveness issues are especially important for the children in urban and rural settings who need well-prepared and highly effective educators the most. In Connecticut, the legislative Achievement Gap Task Force and privately funded entities such as the Connecticut Coalition for Education Reform (CCER) and Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN) are pushing for research to build the evidence base to support teaching and administrative practices that will close Connecticut’s achievement gap.
NEAG SCHOOL OF EDUCATION STRENGTHS IN EDUCATOR QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

- The Neag School of Education has a long-standing commitment to educator quality, as evidenced by our rigorous educator preparation programs, our comprehensive research record, and extensive grant-funding for research-to-practice work in education settings. Many aspects of our preparation programs exemplify current best practice.
- The topic of educator quality cuts across the entire school, engaging faculty and students in the departments of Educational Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction, and Educational Psychology.
- Measurement experts in the Neag School have engaged in extensive R&D work on how to measure teaching and teacher performance as well as student learning, and they bring nationally recognized expertise to this endeavor.
- The Neag School is host to two premier education journals published by Sage. *Educational Administration Quarterly (EAQ)* is a ranked educational leadership journal sponsored by the University Council for Educational Administration. Dr. Casey Cobb, professor and department head, serves as Editor-in-Chief and is supported by several associate editors who are faculty in the departments of Educational Leadership, Educational Psychology, and Curriculum and Instruction. *Gifted Child Quarterly (GCQ)* is the top journal in gifted and talented education and sponsored by the National Association for Gifted Children. GCQ is edited by Dr. D. Betsy McCoach and Dr. Del Siegle from the department of Educational Psychology.
- Teacher Education faculty in Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Psychology are engaged in a state-of-the-art revision of our nationally-recognized teacher preparation program, with a focus on ensuring that our graduates develop “high leverage” teaching practices that have been shown to have the strongest effect on student learning. As part of the program reform effort, faculty will develop measures of beginning teacher effectiveness.
- Neag graduates are known across the state as the best-prepared first-year teachers. Likewise, graduates of our administrator preparation programs are highly sought after and highly successful school principals and superintendents. A Wallace Foundation study undertaken by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute highlighted UCAPP as one of eight exemplary administrator preparation programs.
- The Neag School has a strong presence and, in many cases, well-developed partnerships with school leaders who are facing considerable challenges with current pressures to both evaluate and improve teaching in their schools. Our relationships with school leaders provide us with the level of access required to conduct meaningful research on school-based initiatives. In addition, Educational Leadership faculty are valued collaborators with the Principals’ Center at the Connecticut Association of Schools and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.
- The Neag School has long-standing, trusted relationships with a number of high-need schools and school districts. As an example, the UCAPP PLUS (Preparing Leaders for Urban Schools) program represents a partnership between Neag and Hartford Public Schools.
- The state of Connecticut has a long history of cutting-edge teacher quality reforms. Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) staff are interested in leading the country in the reform of educator preparation, on-going teacher licensure, and educator evaluation. Currently, the state is involved in national initiatives focused on educator development in which Neag plays an active role, such as the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP), the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development,
Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR), and the LEAD Connecticut UCAPP Residency Program for Turnaround School Leaders.

- Neag School faculty and leadership have engaged in productive collaborations with the CSDE for many years. Currently, Neag faculty and administrators play key roles on EPAC, PEAC, SEED, LEAD CT, and CEEDAR. In the past two years, the CSDE has provided millions in funding to Neag to plan, implement, and research the CommPACT Schools initiative for school reform, early reading intervention, mathematics teacher development, and teacher evaluation systems.

- Several Neag faculty have conducted research on educator effectiveness already in the state and nationally. For example, Dr. Rachael Gabriel studied teaching evidence gathered through the Gates Foundation MET project; Dr. Morgaen Donaldson is a Spencer Postdoctoral Fellow studying how incorporating student academic achievement in teachers’ performance evaluations affects teachers’ motivation and work behaviors. We have formed a cross-departmental research team to extend our work in this arena, led by Dr. Suzanne Wilson, Endowed Professor in Teacher Education, National Academy of Education Fellow, and leading figure in the national conversation about educator quality.

- Most importantly, as a result of UConn’s recent hires joining faculty who have dedicated their work to school reform and educator preparation, Neag has perhaps the largest critical mass of scholars who cut across disciplinary specialties in political science, policy, sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, measurement and statistics, economics, and law and who are well positioned to put UConn on the map as a hub for research and practice in relevant education policy, training and preparation programs, and assessment.

OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATOR QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

- We see the potential to grow our collaborations with the CSDE, as well as the Massachusetts Department of Education, in reforms of teacher preparation and professional development, licensure, and on-going professional certification.
- We are well-positioned to contribute to a national discussion about education policy to enhance teacher learning and development.
- The federal government offers considerable research and development funding related to educator quality and effectiveness through the National Science Foundation and the Institute for Education Sciences. State funding for experiments in policy, professional development, higher education reform, teacher preparation and licensure, principal certification, and evaluation will be forthcoming.
- The Neag School of Education is primed to become the home of a national organization, such as the University Council for Educational Administration, and a major journal, such as the Journal of Teacher Education, within the next five years.
- With the addition of eminent faculty, we are poised to recruit cohorts of doctoral students interested in interdisciplinary training in the measurement and improvement of teaching and instructional leadership, as well as in educator preparation. In particular, we see UConn as positioned to create an interdisciplinary doctoral program unlike any in the country, one that is specifically designed to prepare Ph.D.s to be researchers who understand practice and policy and are poised to work with policymakers, educators, and researchers.
Academic Plan Activities and Metrics

The University Academic Vision Committee (UVAC), with input from faculty, students, deans, advisory committees from each school, and others through public forums and electronic dissemination, established five fundamental goals that guide the University strategic plan. The Neag School of Education plays a critical role in achieving UConn’s mission and supporting the ambitious agenda of the University strategic plan. We enthusiastically join with the University community to exemplify excellence in all aspects of our programs. We embrace the metrics set forth by the UAVC and have aligned our school-level strategies to contribute to the University’s success as measured by the metrics.

Based on the strengths and opportunities we have just described, the Neag School of Education is committed to addressing each of these goals through cooperative efforts within the School, across campus, and beyond campus. These actions and metrics affirm our commitment to equity and social justice, STEM education, creativity and innovation, and educator quality and effectiveness.

**Research and Scholarship**

**Goal: To increase research productivity and scholarly influence**
Actions:

- Reorganize the Dean’s office to include an Associate Dean for Research as a key part of an infrastructure for faculty to pursue external funding and support research activity.

- Begin an organized process to nominate outstanding faculty for school, university, national, and international academic honors and awards with an emphasis on external and highly recognized honors.
- Support collaborative research efforts between faculty and students and between faculty and other faculty that lead to publications.
- Establish an organized series of colloquia, seminars, and interchanges to sustain an expanded professional learning community that encourages faculty intellectual growth and research and scholarly collaboration within the University and with faculty at other universities.
- Explore additional funding and scholarly opportunities related to social justice issues.
- Engage with University Communications to disseminate research findings more widely to a variety of stakeholder groups.
- Provide support to increase the number of professional journals housed within Neag.
- Create an infrastructure to improve access to funding, increase externally sponsored research, and support proposal development and writing.

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<td>Refereed and Scholarly Journal Articles</td>
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<td>Scholarly Book Chapters</td>
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<td>Prominent Awards and Honors</td>
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<td>National/International Recognition by Professional Organizations</td>
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<td>Publications in Collaboration with Researchers Outside NSoE</td>
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<td>Publications in Collaboration with Students</td>
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<td>Memberships on Journal Editorial Boards</td>
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<td>Journal Editorships</td>
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<td>Grant Review Panel Member for IES, NSF, etc.</td>
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**Undergraduate Education**

Goal: To expand undergraduate course offerings and enhance undergraduate education

**Actions:**
- Establish and support a University Learning Community focused on Education.
- Expand the diversity of our study abroad programs and increase the number of undergraduates who study abroad.
- Establish university-wide courses/a minor in creativity and innovation.
- Establish university-wide courses/a minor in education policy.
- Increase number of honors courses offered.
- Increase the number of data-driven research projects that Neag honors students complete.
- Increase course offerings in education for undergraduate non-education majors (two per department).
- Offer a STEM education concentration for students enrolled in the teacher preparation program. Forge relationships with STEM faculty across campus to systematize recruiting efforts to increase enrollment in mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, earth science, engineering, and general science teacher preparation.
- Increase undergraduate admission to teacher preparation in critical shortage areas (e.g., special education, mathematics, world languages, science).
- Expand cultural diversity in field placements and student teaching opportunities.
- Increase diversity of students and faculty.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of undergraduate programs to align the curriculum with current trends in relevant academic fields, available resources, and needs of the professional and academic markets.
- Explore the option for a specialization in social justice.
- Explore options to address the state’s educator needs in early childhood education within the newly framed certification categories.
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<th>Metrics</th>
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<td>Undergraduate Education Courses for Non-Majors</td>
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<td>Undergraduate Students Enrolled in Classes</td>
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<td>Education Majors Studying Abroad</td>
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<td>Honors Courses Offered</td>
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<td>STEM Educators Graduated</td>
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<td>Completed Honors Theses</td>
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<td>Students Enrolled in Creativity Courses</td>
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<td>Students Applying to, Enrolling in, and Completing Degrees in Math and Science</td>
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<td>Teacher Preparation</td>
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<td>Students Enrolled/Completing Degrees in Teacher Preparation in Critical Shortage Areas</td>
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**Graduate Education**

Goal: To extend graduate course-taking options and enrollment

**Actions:**

- Develop Additional Online Graduate Certificates, including STEM Education, Creativity and Innovation, and Teacher Leadership.
- Increase graduate admission to teacher preparation in critical shortage areas (e.g., special education, mathematics, world languages, science).
- Raise external funding to support more full-time graduate research assistantships for Ph.D. programs.
- Enhance marketing and recruiting efforts to recruit outstanding graduate students and increase the number of applicants and matriculated students (particularly from underrepresented populations).
- Conduct a comprehensive review of Master’s, Sixth Year, and Ph.D. programs to align with current trends in relevant academic fields, available resources, and needs of the professional and academic markets.
- Explore developing a common core of courses across graduate programs that represent the Neag School of Education “brand.”
- Establish a Ph.D. specialization in educator quality and effectiveness.
- Offer a STEM education concentration for graduate students. Forge relationships with STEM faculty across campus to systematize recruiting efforts to increase enrollment in mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, earth science, and general science teacher preparation.

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<th>Metrics</th>
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<td>Graduate Certificate Programs Offered</td>
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<td>Students Earning a Graduate Certificate</td>
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<td>Students Applied/Admitted/Enrolled</td>
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<td>Average Student GRE Score</td>
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<td>External Support of Graduate Students</td>
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<td>Students Enrolled in Teacher Preparation in Critical Shortage Areas</td>
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**TEACHING**

Goal: To support effective teaching and student learning
Actions:
- Create modules to assist instructors with infusing attention to creative thinking and innovation for students within their courses.
- Coordinate a school-wide project that measures what today’s university students’ view as good teaching and a good teacher.
- Establish a peer support collaboration program for faculty that will include the development of a teaching observation rubric that potentially could be shared to enhance faculty teaching across the university.
- Develop and implement a teaching support program for new faculty, TAs, and adjunct faculty.
- Improve response rate on SET and maintain high ratings.
- Develop and implement a support program for clinical supervisors.
- Add to the number of faculty (Tenure Track, Non-Tenure Track, Adjunct, Teaching Assistant) receiving teaching awards.
- Expand our ability to teach more effectively with technology.
- Organize professional development opportunities.

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<td>Creative Thinking and Innovation Modules Being Used by University Faculty</td>
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<td>SET Response Rate</td>
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<td>Number of Teaching Award Recipients</td>
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<td>Number of Teaching Improvement Opportunities Offered</td>
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**Public Engagement**

Goal: To create opportunities for outreach and collaboration within and outside the Neag School of Education
Actions:

- Explore available resources to contribute to a university-wide effort to establish an interdisciplinary, field-based, community center social tech park that partners academic researchers with nonprofit and social service providers in the community to generate new ways to address social challenges in Connecticut urban centers.
- Partner with university faculty in STEM areas and high school faculty in STEM areas to enhance the STEM pipeline to the university. This would involve construction of curriculum and development of Early College Experience (ECE) courses, including online formats, adapted for high school students.
- Utilize the Mentor Connection program to encourage high school students to pursue STEM careers at UConn.
- Establish a variety of public engagement opportunities for education students in urban centers.
- Develop online professional development for K-12 teachers in STEM and other need areas that reflect Neag faculty expertise.
- Coordinate and centrally market outreach programs that ensure our land grant commitment to educators and community across the state.
- Support student engagement in community and school experiences, including internships, practica, and capstone program experiences.
- Systematize data collection and reporting on hours and content of service learning (course-related service), community service (non-course related service), and public engagement of students, faculty, and staff.
- Continue to provide professional development within the University and outside the University.
- Form partnerships that address social justice issues.
- Provide program resources to serve the University through direct student services, innovative programming, and professional development for administrators through collaborative efforts between HESA and the Division of Student Affairs.

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<th>Metrics</th>
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<td>ECE STEM-Related Courses Offered</td>
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<td>Student Entering UConn with a STEM focus</td>
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<td>Students Engaged in Service Learning/Hours</td>
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<td>Students Engaged in Community Service/Hours</td>
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<td>Students Engaged in Other Forms of Public Engagement/Hours</td>
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<td>Collaborative Relationships With School Districts</td>
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<td>Online Professional Development Offerings/Enrollment</td>
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<td>Faculty Hours Involved with Schools</td>
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Summary

This academic plan describes new opportunities the Neag School of Education will pursue through cooperative efforts among departments within the School, across programs within the University, and beyond the campus. The plan does not list every activity that takes place within the Neag School of Education. As a top 20 public school of education, the Neag School of Education is nationally recognized as a leader in education reform. Our graduates are highly sought, and our teacher education program has one of the highest placement and retention rates in the country. This plan will enable us to maintain the high quality programs for which we are known, while advancing further on our path of excellence.