



Learning Sciences Research Institute

Strategic Plan 2021-2026

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LSRI Mission & Vision Statements

Mission

UIC's Learning Sciences Research Institute (LSRI) advances theories of learning in diverse settings through the design, development, and research of innovative and transformative learning environments and through graduate education. The LSRI promotes collaborative and interdisciplinary activities that draw upon a wide range of knowledge and expertise relevant to addressing the diverse challenges learners face. The work of LSRI spans learning, teaching and curriculum development, and draws upon theory and research in design research, cognitive science, learning theory, curriculum and instruction, educational and instructional psychology, educational policy, and assessment and educational measurement. The LSRI offers a space for scholars and researchers from diverse subject area disciplines, including the natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, humanities, engineering and computer science, to collaborate on projects that aim to investigate and improve learning. The work of LSRI aligns with the UIC commitment to student success and its mission of engaged scholarship within urban communities. The LSRI aspires to create learning environments that offer new insights into how people learn and also provide sustainable solutions to the challenges learners face in and out of schools.

Values

Researchers within LSRI conduct research, teaching, and design activities that are:

- deeply rooted in authentic practices, such as an academic discipline or a professional practice,
- and leverage theories and methods from multiple research traditions
- to address issues and challenges that learners face in authentic contexts
- with the explicit goal of improving the conditions of learning for those who have been and are disadvantaged by systemic inequities in educational institutions.

LSRI Strategic Plan

This strategic plan outlines our goals and priorities for the LSRI. It draws directly from recommendations in the LSRI External Report and related Response, the IBHE Self-Study conducted over the course of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic school years, and climate surveys collected from faculty, students, and staff in December 2020. While this plan frames LSRI's priorities for the next five years, we view it as being flexible as new priorities and challenges emerge.

During Fall 2020, a Strategic Planning Steering Committee was formed that included the Co-Directors, two LS associate faculty and one LS research faculty. Each faculty member served as Chair of one of three Strategic Planning Subcommittees. These subcommittees included members that represented various groups within LSRI, including administrative staff, affiliate faculty, and research personnel. Each subcommittee was given a charge, and met bi-weekly during Fall 2020 and early 2021 to develop their recommendations for this strategic plan. As part of their work, subcommittees interviewed LSRI members, reviewed existing LSRI policies, consulted with campus stakeholders, and met with LSRI students. Their work resulted in three short reports that laid out specific actions to be taken by the co-Directors, a rationale for those actions, and a practical plan for accomplishing those actions. This strategic plan is based on the subcommittee reports.

This strategic plan is organized around two strategic focus areas:

- A) Research Infrastructure
- B) Academic Programming

2021-2026 Strategic Planning Committee

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Research Infrastructure

Priority 1: Revise Fiscal Model to Improve Program Sustainability

We will establish multiple streams of revenue to support an Institute that can reliably provide resources and infrastructure to support the Institute's mission. Revenue streams will include private donations, governmental grants and contracts, fee-for-hire services, and partnerships with local educational agencies.

Strategies

- * Improve marketing of LSRI resources and services to attract new partnerships and donors.
- * Improve grant/contract support services to better support pre- and post-award processes.
- * Collaborate with the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Advancement and the LAS Office of Advancement to establish a collaborative approach to secure private donations.
- * Develop philanthropic targets for supporting the graduate program and partnerships.
- * Identify and establish relationships with potential donors who can provide named fellowships and other support for graduate education.
- * Develop summer programming for community partners.

Indicators

1. Endowed funds
2. Number of donors
3. Planned giving
4. Named fellowship
5. Alumni donations
6. Submitted awards
7. Awarded funds

Priority 2: Improve Work Climate & Communication

We will conduct a comprehensive review of LSRI policies and procedures to improve decision-making, transparency, and participation. Build infrastructure in support of internal and external communication. Gather, understand, and respond to attitudes and perceptions of the Institute to develop more productive relationships. Consider multiple perspectives on LSRI priorities and processes to inform future decisions. Communicate decision-making processes and outcomes more broadly.

Strategies

- * Offer opportunities for faculty, postdocs, students and staff to interact and build community.
- * Send out surveys to get feedback on Institute climate.
- * Establish new meeting schedules to improve information sharing with multiple sub-groups.
- * Establish and fund a community-building committee.
- * Publish a quarterly newsletter.
- * Redesign content and organization of LSRI website.
- * Establish an annual communication plan (internal and external).
- * Establish LSRI by-laws with clear guidelines for decision-making roles.
- * Update and disseminate organization charts to clarify member roles and responsibilities.

Indicators

1. Community committee
2. Community events
3. By-laws approval
4. Climate feedback

Priority 3: Strengthen Faculty and Research Productivity

We will build our research strengths in faculty professional development, in learning and teaching in discipline-based education, and the design of educational technologies. Bolster our efforts to become or preserve a leadership role in these research areas. Encourage new research initiatives both within and across these areas. Conduct national searches to hire faculty, with an emphasis on improving diversity, who further strengthen these research areas and contribute to the Institute mission. Develop comprehensive mentoring and development programs that support and encourage faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students and research staff.

Strategies

- * Highlight faculty efforts in these research areas and foster interdisciplinary collaborations.
- * Create hiring plans with multiple departments, giving priority to recruiting diverse junior faculty.
- * Provide additional opportunities for faculty to affiliate with the Institute and contribute to its mission.
- * Identify research areas in which to strengthen and invest with new hires and infrastructure.
- * Create opportunities for institutional alliances with other LSRI institutions.
- * Develop opportunities for faculty to engage each other with their research activities to promote more interdisciplinary collaborations.

Indicators

1. New faculty
2. Demographics of faculty
3. Faculty development programs
4. Research and development dollars
5. Faculty publications and citations
6. Faculty receiving nationally-recognized awards

Priority 4: Update Facilities to Accommodate Ambitious Research Agendas

We will evaluate the shared technology services to better support research activities that involve the design of educational technologies and the study of authentic teaching and learning activities. Provide infrastructure and space that enhances interdisciplinary research, collaborative work, and an atmosphere of innovation.

Strategies

- * Pursue capital improvement opportunities for research infrastructure.
- * Apply for grants that establish research centers and technology upgrades.
- * Create new opportunities for shared access to institute resources
- * Conduct a comprehensive space analysis. Reorganize space to better support collaborative research.

Indicators

1. Efficient use of space
2. Facility upgrades
3. New collaborations access space
4. Successfully funding for facility improvement
5. Number of infrastructure proposals submitted

Academic Programming

Priority 5: Revise the Ph.D. Curriculum

We will revise our Ph.D. program to better align our curriculum with current developments in the field of Learning Sciences and that reflect our research strengths in professional development, in learning and teaching in discipline-based education, and the design of educational technologies. Bring attention to issues of cultural, racial and disciplinary diversity throughout the curriculum. Negotiate co-teaching arrangements with LS faculty affiliates to enhance diversity of instructor perspectives in courses. Develop stronger connections with local organizations, businesses, museums and school districts that could provide internships for advanced graduate students. Provide supports for writing and the development of other professional skills within the curriculum. Develop a concentration in Learning Sciences to expand course offerings to the broader community of UIC graduate students.

Strategies

- *Conduct curriculum mapping process among core courses and program milestones.
- *Update existing course content.
- *Revisit structure, sequencing of core coursework.
- *Revise program milestones.
- *Develop elective courses.
- *Establish co-teaching arrangements of core and elective courses with LS faculty affiliates.
- *Revisit faculty-student advising structure and advising load.
- *Develop Learning Sciences concentration program.

Indicators

1. Revised course content in all core courses
2. Revised program milestones
3. Students placed in internships in local organizations and businesses
4. New elective courses
5. Courses co-taught
6. Establishment of Learning Sciences concentration program

Priority 6: Develop a Masters in Learning Sciences Program

We will develop a Masters in Learning Sciences program in collaboration with UIC Extended Campus. Build program coursework and requirements to allow for both a pathway to the PhD program and a pathway to a terminal degree. Align coursework with current developments in the field of Learning Sciences and that reflect our research strengths in professional development, in learning and teaching in higher education, and the design of educational technologies. Develop stronger connections with local organizations, businesses, museums and school districts that could serve as potential employers for graduates of the Masters program. Provide opportunities for advanced graduate students and LSRI research faculty to teach courses in the Masters program.

Strategies

- *Meet with UIC Extended Campus to discuss program viability.
- *Provide financial incentives for faculty to develop Masters coursework during the summer.
- *Apply for a new program in accordance with UIC administrative processes.

Indicators

1. Approval of Masters in Learning Sciences program
2. Enrollment of first cohort of masters students