AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Department of Nutritional Sciences

STRATEGIC PLAN

Advancing health. Creating opportunity. Amplifying impact.

A clear framework for education, research, collaboration, innovation, and measurable progress.

October 1, 2026

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Five Goals. One Shared Purpose.

Our strategic plan organizes the department's priorities into five interconnected goals. Together, they guide how we serve students, advance knowledge, strengthen partnerships, invest in innovation, and improve health and well-being.

1	**Sustaining Health and Well-Being**
2	**Creating Pathways to Success through the Student Experience**
3	**Improving through Collaboration**
4	**Impacting through Research and Scholarship**
5	**Fostering Innovations in Motion**

Measurement principle: Each goal includes proposed key performance indicators that can be refined into annual targets, assigned ownership, and reported consistently over time.

1 Sustaining Health and Well-Being

OUR COMMITMENT

Our state, nation, and the global community continue to face nutrition-related challenges that impact quality of life. The Department of Nutritional Sciences is dedicated to delivering high-quality education, innovative research, and impactful outreach that improves the health and well-being of students, individuals, and communities. The department's commitment to health and well-being is central to everything we do, from student experience and collaboration to research and innovation.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS

- Percentage of programs achieving exemplary status in the annual assessment review
- Distribution of faculty research activity across basic, applied, translational, and community-engaged scholarship
- Proportion of faculty receiving departmental or external support for conference participation
- Faculty and staff participation in professional development activities, including conferences, trainings, and certifications

2 Creating Pathways to Success through the Student Experience

OUR COMMITMENT

Students are the heart and soul of the department, and our faculty and staff are devoted to guiding them throughout their academic and professional journeys. Our rigorous curriculum is enriched by experiential learning, mentorship, and partnerships across the discipline. We ensure that our graduates are career-ready, possessing technical and interpersonal skills and the adaptability to thrive in their professions.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS

- Number of experiential learning opportunities integrated into curricula
- Proportion of students completing at least one high-impact experiential learning experience prior to graduation
- Number of undergraduate and graduate students engaged in faculty-mentored research or scholarly activities
- Number of internal and external student research outputs, including presentations, posters, and co-authored publications
- Number of graduate students supported through research assistantships or funded projects
- Student participation rates in leadership roles or leadership development activities

•	Number of students receiving awards at professional conferences

3 Improving through Collaboration

OUR COMMITMENT

The development and sustainability of partnerships allow us to extend our reach and amplify the impact of our research, education, and outreach. Our partners span faculty across diverse academic units as well as clinical- and community-based organizations in Alabama and beyond. Our collaborative work is essential to preparing students, advancing research, and addressing real-world needs. Together, we achieve greater outcomes and broader impact, locally and across the globe.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS

- Number of faculty engaged in interdisciplinary research, instruction, or outreach teams
- Number of interdisciplinary research, instruction, or outreach projects involving departmental faculty
- Amount of external research funding supporting interdisciplinary or collaborative teams
- Percentage of faculty and staff participating annually in at least one cross-functional departmental initiative

4 Impacting through Research and Scholarship

OUR COMMITMENT

Research conducted in the Department of Nutritional Sciences advances discovery and scalable solutions to societal challenges in nutrition. Faculty engage and mentor undergraduate and graduate students in research, from bench to community. Our research and scholarship are often interdisciplinary and serve as a primary method for engaging collaborators.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS

- Faculty retention rates and time to tenure or promotion
- PhD student retention, time to degree, and research productivity, including publications and presentations
- Number of faculty presentations, invited talks, or panels
- Number and total dollar amount of research funding submissions and awards across funding sources
- Proportion of faculty engaged in externally funded research
- Use of internal or seed funding to support research, including dissemination of findings
- Number of peer-reviewed publications and percentage of high-impact publications
- Percentage of new faculty who pursue formal research mentors or mentoring teams

5 Fostering Innovations in Motion

OUR COMMITMENT

Faculty and staff are committed to fostering innovation in every aspect of the department, including teaching, assessment, research, Extension, and outreach. Investment in infrastructure, operations, and state-of-the-art teaching spaces increases capacity for faculty, students, and staff to explore responsive and impactful approaches to teaching and learning, research, and the extension of knowledge into communities. Innovation is an expectation and reflects departmental, college, and university aspirations to contribute to positive change and enhance quality of life.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS

- Faculty participation rates in technology-focused professional development or instructional innovation initiatives
- Number of faculty recognized for innovation, including teaching awards, funded projects, invited presentations, and scholarly dissemination
- Faculty participation in initiatives that support instructional, scholarly, or engagement innovation
- Evidence of innovative practices adopted or scaled across the department, including new pedagogies, interdisciplinary approaches, and engaged scholarship models

FROM PLAN TO PROGRESS

A Practical Annual Cycle

1	**Set annual targets** Establish a baseline, target, data source, and responsible owner for each selected indicator.
2	**Track consistently** Use a shared reporting schedule and common definitions to support reliable, comparable data.
3	**Review together** Assess progress at regular departmental checkpoints and identify barriers, opportunities, and needed support.
4	**Communicate impact** Share concise updates with faculty, staff, students, partners, and other stakeholders.
5	**Refine and renew** Adjust strategies and measures as programs, priorities, and external conditions evolve.

Our shared commitment: measurable progress that improves lives through nutrition.