SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

STRATEGIC PLAN
OU has an opportunity to capitalize upon its expertise and build on existing strengths to promote societal well-being by focusing on three key research areas: Technology, Society, and Human Flourishing; Native Nations, Sovereignty, and Partnerships; and Equity and Opportunity. Existing and emerging research at OU will enhance knowledge about the beneficial and harmful impacts of technology on society, including artificial intelligence and the impact of technological adaptation, and on human behavior across health, education, and work-family life.

OU’s institutional resources and collections, faculty capabilities, and geographic location in the state provide an unmatched opportunity for community-engaged, collaborative partnerships that place the sovereignty of Native Nations and the cultural continuance of Native peoples at the center of academic research and forms a key area for OU’s growth and national distinction. Oklahoma has a population that suffers from many significant challenges, including very poor outcomes in education and health and high levels of incarceration, especially among women. OU is uniquely positioned to conduct meaningful transdisciplinary research to address issues related to equity and opportunity at the state and national levels by expanding existing expertise in early childhood, carceral studies, and health disparities across all three OU campuses.

Enhancing Knowledge at the Intersections of Technology and Society

Technology profoundly influences the human experience, offering potential to advance the flourishing of individuals and communities. Medical technologies and information systems extend health care to people lacking access. Learning technologies support both remote and face-to-face education. E-commerce and business analytics inform the way we work today and in the future. Communication technologies bring new levels and types of social and cultural connections. Artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies are influencing work, public policy, and everyday life. These technologies also introduce challenges such as cybersecurity threats, workforce changes,
family strains, digital disinformation campaigns, and inauthentic behavior enabled by digital media. The use of biased algorithms can foster discriminatory practices and decisions. The study of the interconnections between technology and society is a robust field embracing work from many disciplines, ranging from historical technology studies, to social scientific analyses of emerging technologies, to explorations of human-centered design.

By leveraging transdisciplinary research related to society and community transformation, from the humanities and creative arts to the social sciences and core STEM fields, we can effectively address emerging needs in the public/private sector at state, national, and global levels. We will study the capabilities and risks of artificial intelligence technologies and identify cybersecurity vulnerabilities. We will better understand the impacts of healthcare information systems and medical technology on public health. We will explore the ethics of technology uses and social media communication, technology adoption, and legal implications along with technology impacts on the U.S. workforce, U.S. intelligence gathering, and technology-related public policies.

Research on emerging technologies offers numerous opportunities for OU. Furthermore, our location in Oklahoma uniquely positions us to study the impacts of technology on multiple populations, including Native American Nations, and to address state challenges such as poverty and social inequities.

**Advancing Equity and Opportunity**

Societies that flourish are those that provide safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children and families. However, individuals and communities flounder when there is unequal access to opportunities and supportive environments. These inequalities are reflected in vast disparities in education and health outcomes and in disproportionate and excessive incarceration. Emerging transdisciplinary research shows promise of discovering actionable solutions to help all caregivers of young children provide nurturing environments, improve education and health outcomes at the individual and community level, and prevent involvement in the criminal justice system.

Oklahoma has a population that suffers from many significant challenges. Oklahoma ranks last
or near the bottom in several educational and health indicators, and first in female incarceration. Most of these indicators show disparities by race, ethnicity, and social class and cluster in segments of the Oklahoma population that further amplify inequity. Women, children, and families bear a large burden of these challenges that carry the potential for intergenerational cycles of social disadvantage with high costs to society if not addressed.

While these challenges and the disparities are complex, the solution lies in holistic transdisciplinary research. A recent landmark study found that high-quality early childhood programming improves children’s educational outcomes as well as longer-term outcomes, such as adult employment, health, and lower incarceration rates. Preventing adversities in early childhood is also associated with better health and longevity. While this growing body of research is compelling, little is known about the underlying mechanisms producing these results, how to equalize opportunity for the most disadvantaged, and how to disrupt the interconnections between early childhood experiences, educational problems, involvement with the criminal justice system, and health and well-being throughout life. These topics are significant not just for Oklahoma, but for other states, the nation, and international contexts.

Convergence research positions OU to make real progress in improving the prospects for many of Oklahoma’s citizens and communities and applying this scholarship beyond Oklahoma. The transdisciplinary, partnership approach proposed here will also attract graduate students and faculty who want to conduct meaningful scholarship with positive benefits to society. Few top academic institutions have this targeted comprehensive focus on improving the lives of and addressing inequities for women, children, and families through research-based solutions, transdisciplinary emphasis, and innovative graduate training. OU could become the place that grows top new faculty, inviting the best to stay at OU and launching others to fill top positions at other institutions.

By virtue of its location in the midst of communities with high levels of need, OU can fill a void and emerge as a leader in these research areas and bridge theoretical and practical interconnections among them. We will build on strong existing relationships among researchers and Oklahoma communities and state and tribal agency leadership to ensure our research is relevant and put into practice.

Partnering with Native Nations to Strengthen Cultural Continuance and Sovereignty

A recent resurgence of tribal institutions and dynamic new leadership is addressing global challenges for Native nations. Oklahoma is home to 39 culturally distinctive Native nations and nearly 500,000 American Indians, representing approximately 16% of the total state population. Native nations are key actors in Oklahoma’s culture, economy, and governance structures. Building roads and bridges, funding schools, operating health care clinics and hospitals, providing social services and child welfare programming, shepherding environmental and natural resource management and research, and preserving and revitalizing languages and cultural practices, Oklahoma tribes are, more
now than at any time in U.S. history, creating greater opportunities for everyone in the state. Unfortunately, tribal communities have often lacked true partners from research institutions, and models for effective collaboration are in short supply. Our work in this area seeks to advance the science and scholarship of tribal engagement, establishing the standard for national and international work to advance the causes of Native peoples.

OU’s institutional resources and collections, faculty capabilities, diverse student body, and geographic location in the midst of unique and diverse tribal nations provide an unmatched opportunity for community-engaged, collaborative partnerships that center the sovereignty of Native nations and the cultural continuance of Native peoples. Our grand challenge is to seek out and address the needs of tribal communities where tribes set the priorities and shape research, scholarship, and creative activity to advance the wellbeing of tribal citizens and communities, while also providing unique opportunities for university faculty, staff, and students.

A legacy of historical trauma and loss, combined with persistent ongoing neglect by U.S. institutions, has often generated significant disparities for Native people. Despite these challenges, tribal communities across the country have articulated innovative models of tribal governance and unique approaches to addressing global challenges. Authentic engagement by the university with tribal institutions, which privileges Native voices and perspectives, can point the way to transformations in Native communities throughout the world.

There is, quite simply, no other institution in the country with the tribal partnerships and historical commitments to do this work. OU serves unrivaled numbers of Native students for a research-intensive institution, with significant Native faculty leadership in almost every college, including every campus. Numerous tribal partnerships have now been in place for decades, giving rise to significant work in the arts and humanities as well as the social and natural sciences, while our professional programs have been foundational for the tribal workforce in the state. These dynamics make OU uniquely positioned to advance this work.
MISSION

To reduce inequity and forge new pathways toward positive societal transformation through community-engaged research and creative activity that advances health and well-being, social justice, arts and humanities, education, and technological and workforce adaptations.

VISION

Transforming societies by setting the national standard for convergent, community-engaged research and creative activity.
STRATEGY 1

Organizational Structure

Create and sustain an Society and Community Transformation (SCT) Institute that houses methodological expertise and includes a repository of data and technological tools to support research and creative activity.

TACTIC 1.1 Recruit an engaged, agile leadership team for the SCT Institute within six months of the institute’s creation.

TACTIC 1.2 Secure collaborative physical space for the activities of the SCT Institute to house SCT leadership, faculty affiliates, staff, graduate students, visiting scholars and postdoctoral fellows within six months of the institute’s creation.

TACTIC 1.3 Develop a sustainable organizational structure that provides administrative proposal development and grant management support within the first six months of the institute’s creation.

TACTIC 1.4 Build a premier repository of data, scientific and technological tools that facilitate insights into the causes and consequences of inequity and inform research-based solutions in Oklahoma within two years of the institute’s creation.

TACTIC 1.5 Develop a resource matrix and a staffing requirement plan to support collaborations with external partners and maintenance of the data repository, within a year.

TACTIC 1.6 Establish data analytics and methodological research expertise and/or partnerships to support society and community grounded convergence research within a year from the creation of the SCT Institute.

TACTIC 1.7 Build a baseline budget for analytical facilities, IT infrastructure acquisition and maintenance, seminars, seed funding and course release support to sustain ongoing collaborations and nucleate new research teams within a year from the SCT Institute’s creation.
STRATEGY 2

Talent

Establish and support transdisciplinary research teams in areas of strategic importance to Society and Community Transformation.

**TACTIC 2.1** Assess existing capacity and perform gap analysis to identify transdisciplinary teams in strategic areas for SCT research within the first six months and every year from the establishment of the institute.

**TACTIC 2.2** Identify, contact, and recruit OU faculty and researchers from diverse groups who have interest and expertise in our identified areas of strategic importance within the first year.

**TACTIC 2.3** Develop transdisciplinary collaboration in each area through specific writing projects and other creative activity within the first year of the Institute’s creation and yearly thereafter.

**TACTIC 2.4** Recruit new faculty to complement existing faculty expertise in our research focus thrusts, by adding three-to-five new lines in each of the areas of strategic importance for the institute within the first 36 months.

**TACTIC 2.5** Grow postdoctoral capacity by funding and filling four postdoctoral fellowships annually across the identified areas within 24 months.

**TACTIC 2.6** Create a visiting faculty program to help build expertise in areas of strategic importance for the SCT Institute and enhance potential for outside partnerships, beginning the program in the second year of the institute.

**TACTIC 2.7** Build graduate student capacity through six additional GRA lines for the institute by the end of the first year.
STRATEGY 3

Partnerships

Establish and nurture community partnerships and engagement vital to the SCT Institute’s success.

**TACTIC 3.1** Provide research and scholarship support for tribal community engagement, through strategic partnership, within a year.

**TACTIC 3.2** Recruit a community matchmaker and broader impact specialist within six months.

**TACTIC 3.3** Leverage and expand existing relationships with relevant state agencies in collaboration with OU’s Office of Government Affairs by the end of year 1.

**TACTIC 3.4** Identify national and international research institutes, centers, and corporate partners to initiate formal collaborations within the first three years.

**TACTIC 3.5** Assess, catalog, and promote current faculty partnerships and research expertise in SCT related research to foster transdisciplinary collaboration within the first six months.

**TACTIC 3.6** Build community capacity and long-term sustainability of collaborations between community and university within two years.
STRATEGY 4

Processes

Develop transdisciplinary/convergence research processes to guide and govern successful research and creative activity within the SCT Institute.

TACTIC 4.1 Create an advisory board within the first six months and establish annual meetings.

TACTIC 4.2 Develop a transdisciplinary process and an internal funding allocation mechanism to promote deep integration among disciplinary scholars and create diverse and inclusive partnerships by the second year of the institute’s establishment.

TACTIC 4.3 Create processes for external outreach that includes community stakeholders and collaborators.

TACTIC 4.4 Develop incentives that encourage participation in transdisciplinary research within six months.

TACTIC 4.5 Organize research and community engagement events for the University, to encourage transdisciplinary research in accessible terms and catalyze cross-disciplinary involvement. Launch this series by the beginning of the second year of the institute.
STRATEGY 5

Finance

Build a robust and sustainable financial portfolio of dedicated funding for the operational costs of the SCT Institute and in support of its convergence research mission.

**TACTIC 5.1** Identify interdisciplinary, and convergence funding opportunities as candidates for developing extramural proposals and assemble teams of interested researchers and practitioners on a continuous basis from the start of the institute. Set an annual target and monitor on a yearly basis.

**TACTIC 5.2** Develop strategies and plans for pursuing possible funding opportunities from the federal government within six months.

**TACTIC 5.3** Identify a set of strategies for pursuing possible funding opportunities from donors and foundations within 18 months.

**TACTIC 5.4** Develop and submit one convergence research proposal within a year from start of Institute and each year thereafter.

**TACTIC 5.5** Develop and submit at least one major funded interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary proposal for each major strategic area of importance by the end of the first two years of the institute.

**TACTIC 5.6** Develop a process to regularly promote ideas to funding agencies and seek funding to host workshops on themes that could bring awareness to SCT strengths and lead to funding opportunities by year 2.

**TACTIC 5.7** Establish seed funding programs to stimulate convergence research relevant to fundamental SCT activities and in alignment with federal and foundational funding opportunities.
STRATEGY 6

Marketing

Produce targeted and creative marketing and communication strategies to increase convergence research and creative-based opportunities, contribute to SCT sustainability, and inform policy and practice.

TACTIC 6.1 Recruit, fill, and onboard SCT Director of Communications, in coordination with the other strategic research verticals' institutes and OU Marketing and Communications, within the first year.

TACTIC 6.2 Develop a comprehensive communication plan, including the identification of target audiences and budget in coordination with OU's existing offices for Marketing and Communications, within the first year.

TACTIC 6.3 Convene stakeholders on a biannually basis to provide input and evaluate communication processes and products.

TACTIC 6.4 Develop and deliver communication training to SCT faculty and staff by the end of the second year. Focus on supporting faculty/staff to tailor and package messages for varied audiences.

TACTIC 6.5 Provide a menu of research/creative activity and evaluation research services available to community and government agencies in a partnership context by the end of first year.