

Discovery 2030 @ South: Findings & Next Steps

CO-PRESENTED BY

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February 25, 2026

AGENDA

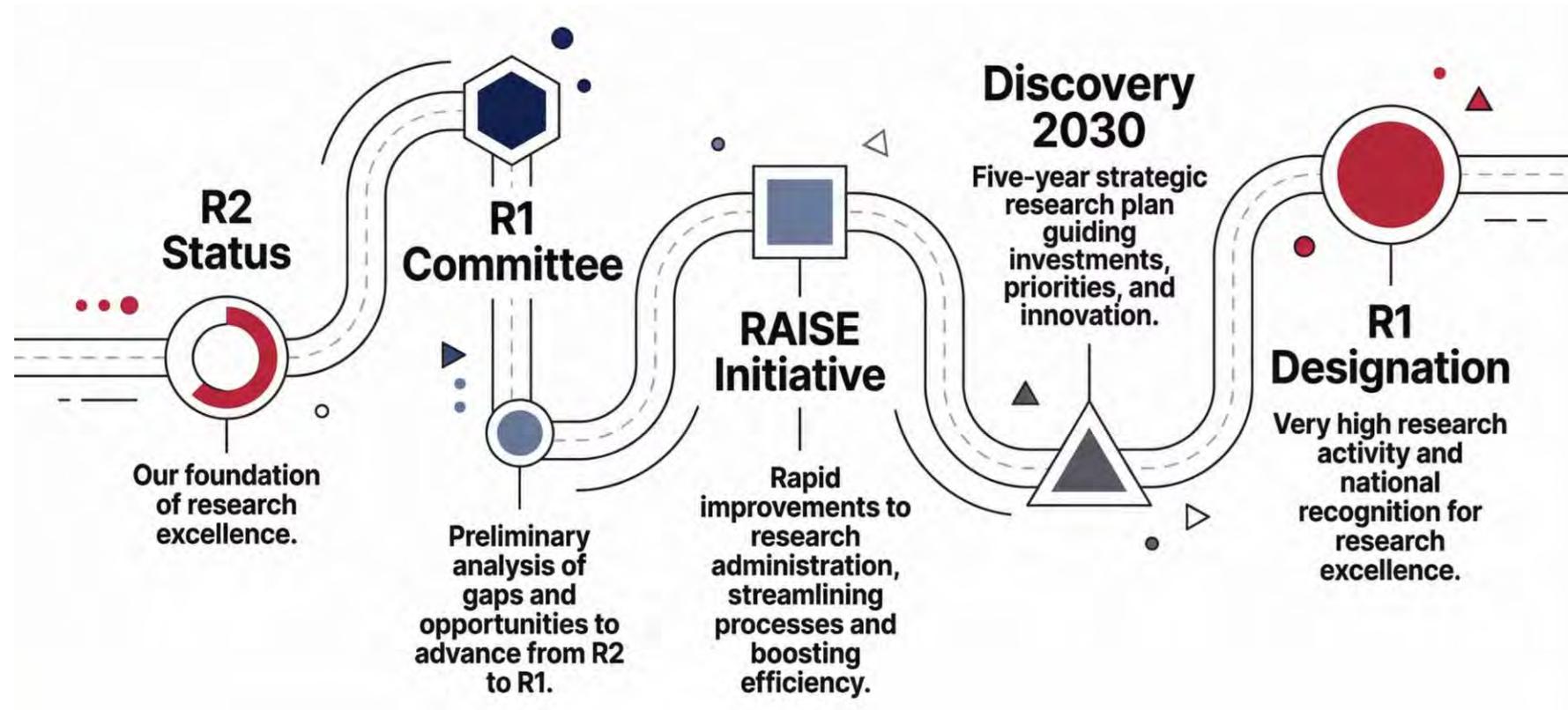
- Welcome 5 mins
- ORED Presentation 40 mins
- Q&A 15 mins



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH ALABAMA

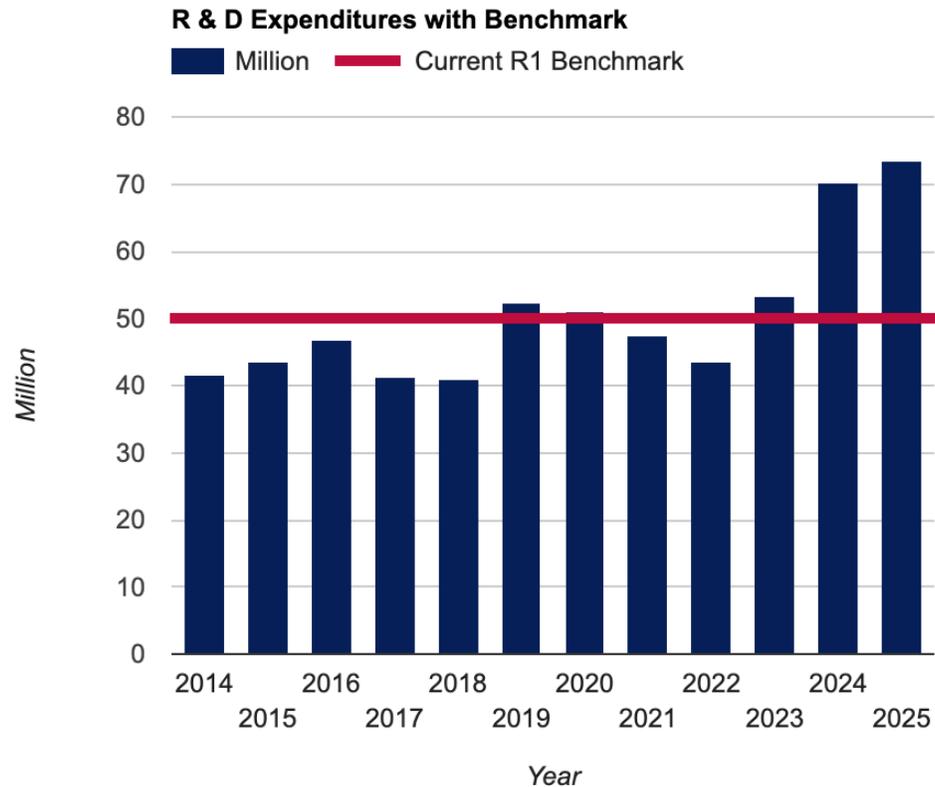
FLAGSHIP OF THE GULF COAST

Our Journey to R1



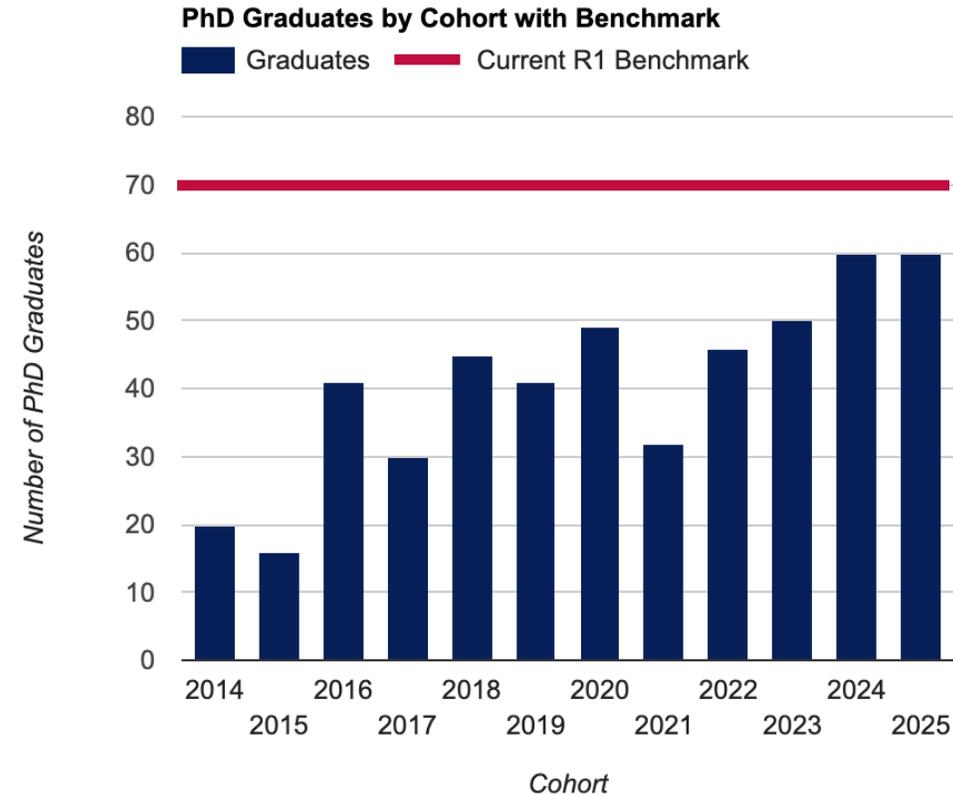
Each milestone builds critical capacity — from understanding the challenge, to modernizing our infrastructure, to setting a bold strategic vision — propelling us toward the national recognition that R1 status represents.

Journey to R1: Where Are We Now?



R1 in Funding

- 3 consecutive years
- 5 of the past 7 years



Nearly R1 in Research Doctorates

- 60 for the past 2 years
- Need to be at 70

R1 Journey: RAISE Initiative

Research Administration Improvement

Our analysis identified three areas requiring immediate attention to optimize research administration operations. These findings reveal systemic challenges in staffing allocation, workflow efficiency, and process optimization that impact our ability to manage pre- and post-award functions.

Staffing Gaps



Insufficient FTE in critical positions for conducting pre-award and post-award functions. Strategic recommendations are being developed for optimal resource allocation.

Workflow Bottlenecks



Identified delays in post-award transaction processing. Targeted remediation strategies are under development to streamline operations and reduce processing time.

Process Opportunities



Additional risks and improvement opportunities discovered. Comprehensive recommendations under development for enhancing overall research administration effectiveness.

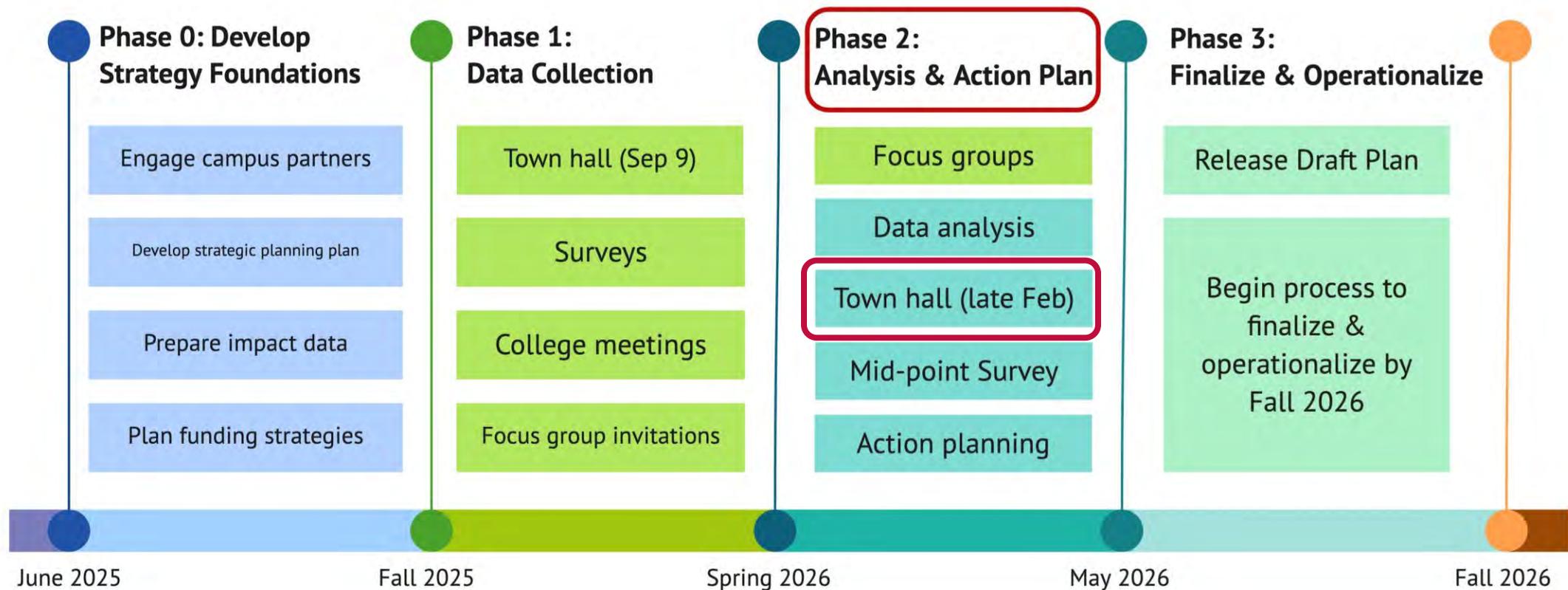
Next Steps

Implementation of recommendations will strengthen our research administration capabilities and position us for sustained success.

Key Focus Areas

- Strategic FTE placement and hiring
- Workflow optimization initiatives
- Process improvement implementation
- Ongoing monitoring and adjustment

R1 Journey: Discovery 2030 Recap & Timeline





Data at a Glance

9

colleges
or schools
engaged

college
meetings

219

unique
participants

in

24

hours of
meetings

6

outreach meetings
w campus partners

80

pages of
transcripts

focus
groups

8+2

colleges +
departments
engaged

19%

full-time faculty
participated (est.)

lines of data,
hand-coded **777**

135

potentially actionable suggestions,
and counting

23

pages of
survey
responses



Thanks to All Participants

What does a thriving research culture look like at South?

"What do you hope to get out of today's session?"

- General vision, university strategy
- Resource allocation and investments
- Plans for improving research administration support and related processes
- Plans for more grant writing support and junior faculty support
- Plans for (and importance of) collaboration support
- Navigating the current political context

"What is something good that happened to you today?"

- Good interactions with colleagues or students
- Professional milestones: articles finished or accepted
- Enjoying the weather and nature
- Getting exercise, often outside
- Being alive, and wellness
- An easy commute
- Connecting with family and pets
- Snacks or coffee

What Have We Learned?

Our extensive qualitative data is aligned with R1 Committee findings and...

- Adds a human dimension to the understanding of opportunities & challenges;
- Helps suggest priority areas for strategy implementation, including areas of critical need; and
- Provides insights into institutional climate and culture.
- We have made valuable connections with faculty.
- We have collected many models and examples.

Overall Themes

- **Need:** improved research administration support in all phases of the research lifecycle.
- **Need:** improvements to research-related processes and policies.
- **Need:** better communication about existing institutional resources related to research and research administration.





Overall Themes

- **Need:** shore up support for existing research infrastructure, such as software, library resources, technical support, or maintenance contracts.
- **Need:** more statistical support, as well as centralized information.
- **Need:** create robust support for translational research to bridge main campus and USA Health clinical faculty and facilities.
- **Need:** more support for junior faculty on the research track, tailored to faculty with differing experience and needs.

Opportunities

- Improvements to research administration support, including research development.
- Increasing support for research collaboration.
- Better communication about the value of research, ORED services, and institutional resources.
 - *Nominate your colleagues for our new research awards!*

Opportunities

- Introducing research mentoring.
- Facilitating institutional conversations about change that will make a difference (e.g. statistical support).
- Addressing clinical translational research support.

Identifying Priorities, Strategies, & Metrics

- **Priorities:**

Which key ideas and findings resonate with the campus community, address critical needs, and position South as a research leader for the future?

- **Strategies:**

What strategies best advance our priorities, unlock our talent, and enable us to be an enterprise filled with innovative, creative problem solvers?

- **Metrics:**

What does success look like, and how will we measure it?
What formative assessments will we establish?

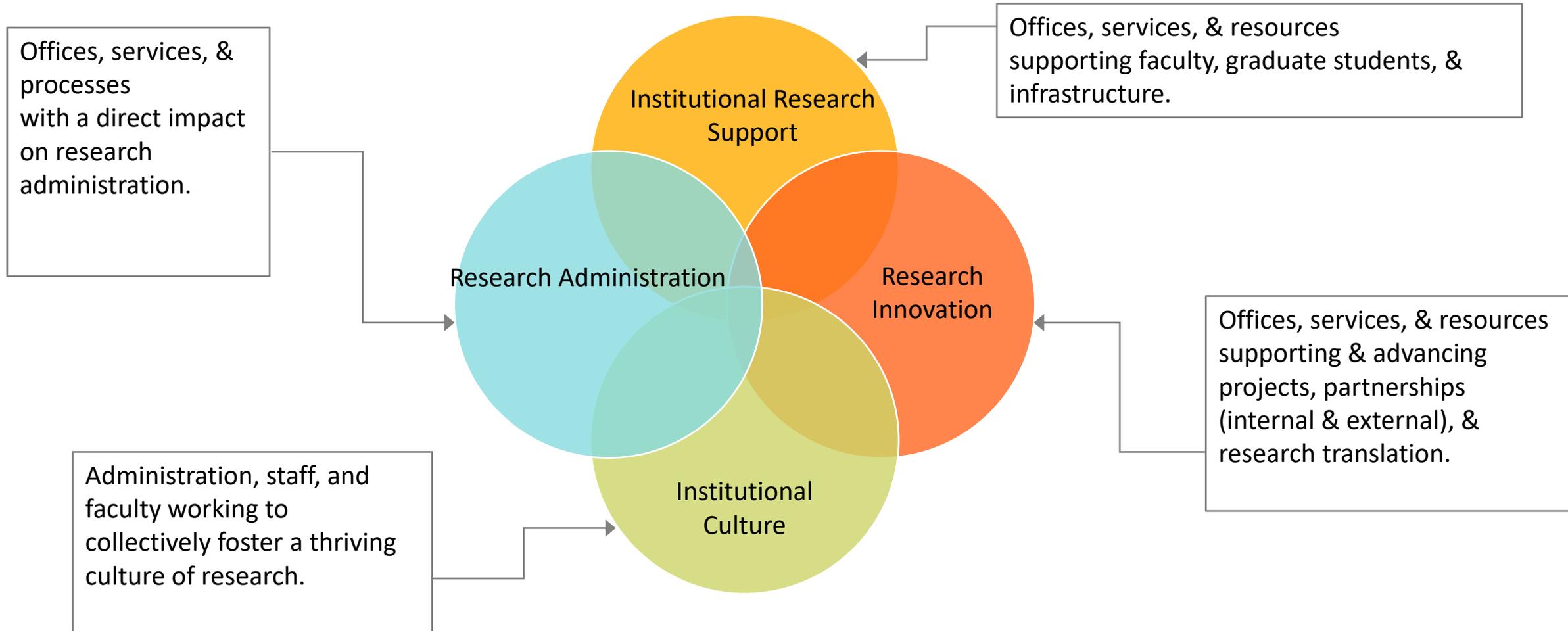
Discovery 2030 Activities

Our remaining activities will focus on getting campus feedback on priorities, strategies, and metrics.

- Midpoint Survey: open to all, closing in early April.
- Action Planning Sessions: four facilitated sessions, to be held in late March/early April; attendance capped at 20.

We will incorporate this additional data as we develop the draft of a community-informed research strategic plan.

Spheres for Research Growth & Impact



Office of Research and Economic Development

	Research Administration	Research Innovation
Areas of Concern	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%; text-align: center;">Research Security</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%; text-align: center;">Compliance and Research Integrity</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%; text-align: center;">Sponsored Programs Administration</div> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">CUI, Classified, Foreign Inf Int'l Engagement</p> <p style="text-align: center;">IRB, IACUC Bio Safety RCR, Integrity</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pre-Award Post-Award Contracts</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%; text-align: center;">Research Development</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%; text-align: center;">Commercialization and Technology Development</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%; text-align: center;">Industry and Government Partnerships</div> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Faculty Funding Progs Proposals</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Faculty Funding Progs IP, Patents, License</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Industry Government Master Agreements</p>
Metrics	<p style="text-align: center;"># of Protocols per Time Unit</p> <p style="text-align: center;"># of Protocols per Time Unit</p> <p style="text-align: center;"># of Proposals # of Awards per Time Unit</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"># of Proposals # of Awards Dollar Amount of Proposals and Awards</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Disclosures Patents Licenses New Companies</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Partnerships Master Agreements</p>
Functions	<p>Transactional Assistance</p> <p>Marketing and Communication</p> <p>Problem Identification</p>	<p>Transactional Assistance</p> <p>Marketing and Communication</p> <p>Product Identification</p>
Strategies	<p>To be recommended by RAISE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To address staffing gaps • To address workflow bottlenecks • To improve process 	<p>USA Gateway</p> <p>USA Research Initiatives</p> <p>USA Foundry</p> <p>USA Talent Machine</p>

Pilot Strategies for Research Innovation

In Ideation and Development

Research Innovation Strategies

Program	Commodity	Current Alignment	Future Alignment	Who Benefits?
USA Gateway	Services (Placement, interns, research collaboration, IP, access to infrastructure, tech park, etc.)	Siloed with the units that offer the services	One stop shop that coordinates services	WE DO – More partners, including more research partners.
USA Talent Machine	Students/Graduates	Each student meets the requirements of a major aligned to jobs with various degrees of demand	Students major in their passion, and upskill to evolving job preferences through flexible micro-credentials	WE DO – Our graduates get jobs and our programs thrive, and the entities that employ our graduates become research partners.
USA Research Initiatives	Research	Academic departments try to balance their research across areas of each discipline	In addition to intradisciplinary research, these initiatives will accelerate interdisciplinary alignment to <u>new topics of interest externally</u> .	WE DO – Our research is expanded into new areas of external interest that will generate more partners and a virtuous cycle.
USA Foundry	Intellectual Property	When we occasionally find an interested external party, we sell the IP to them	Where possible, establish <u>internal</u> pain points that an innovation will solve (a “ventures” office).	WE DO – IP is captured to solve <u>our</u> problems, de-risking that IP for the external market.

USA Gateway

A unified, single point-of-entry system for engaging industry, government, and nonprofit partners. Today's fragmented approach results in lost opportunities and long contracting cycles. The USA Gateway creates a centralized, concierge-driven approach that streamlines all external engagement and accelerates partnership impact.

Standardized Legal Framework

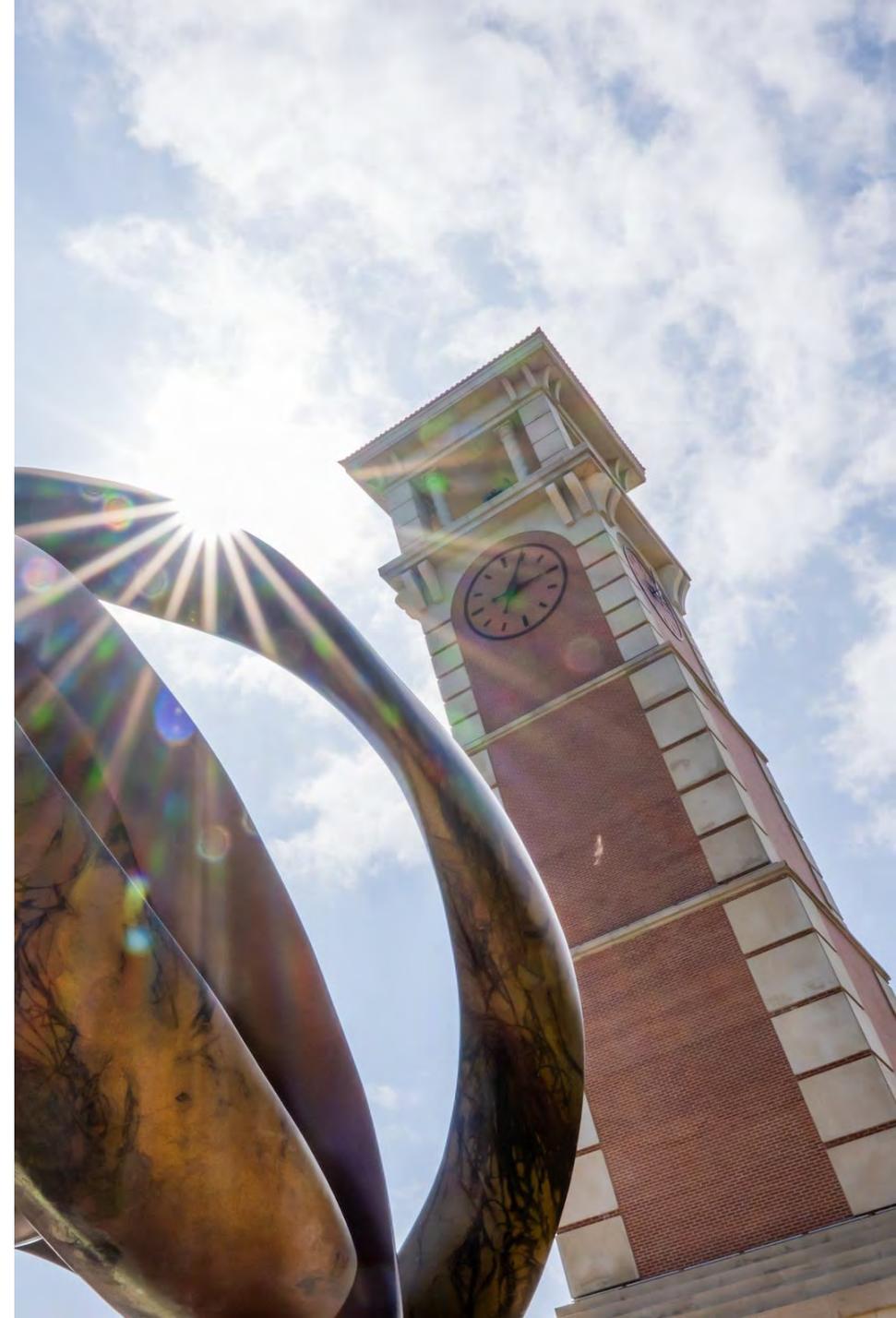
Master Service Agreements establish baseline terms once, with rapid Task Orders reducing overall contract time

Concierge Model

Professional staff serve as guided navigators and long-term relationship managers, driving deals from intake through delivery

Digital Infrastructure

Unified CRM, Enterprise Data Warehouse, and AI Matching Engine eliminate duplicated outreach and enable smart faculty-partner connections



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USA Talent Machine – Experiential Learning

A streamlined program connecting students with real-world industry experience through a centralized employment model. Students work as USA employees while gaining hands-on experience with partner companies.

01

Register Students

Students sign up with their availability, skills, and interests to create a talent pool ready for deployment.

03

Contract Formation

Companies contract directly with USA for intern services, simplifying the business relationship.

Key Advantages

Flexibility

Seamlessly assign and reassign students to roles based on evolving needs and skill matches.

Faculty Integration

Potential to integrate faculty expertise and university infrastructure with real industry problems.

Reduced Overhead

Companies avoid the administrative burden of establishing separate business relationships with each student.

02

Register Companies

Partner companies submit their project needs and intern requirements to the program.

04

Student Employment

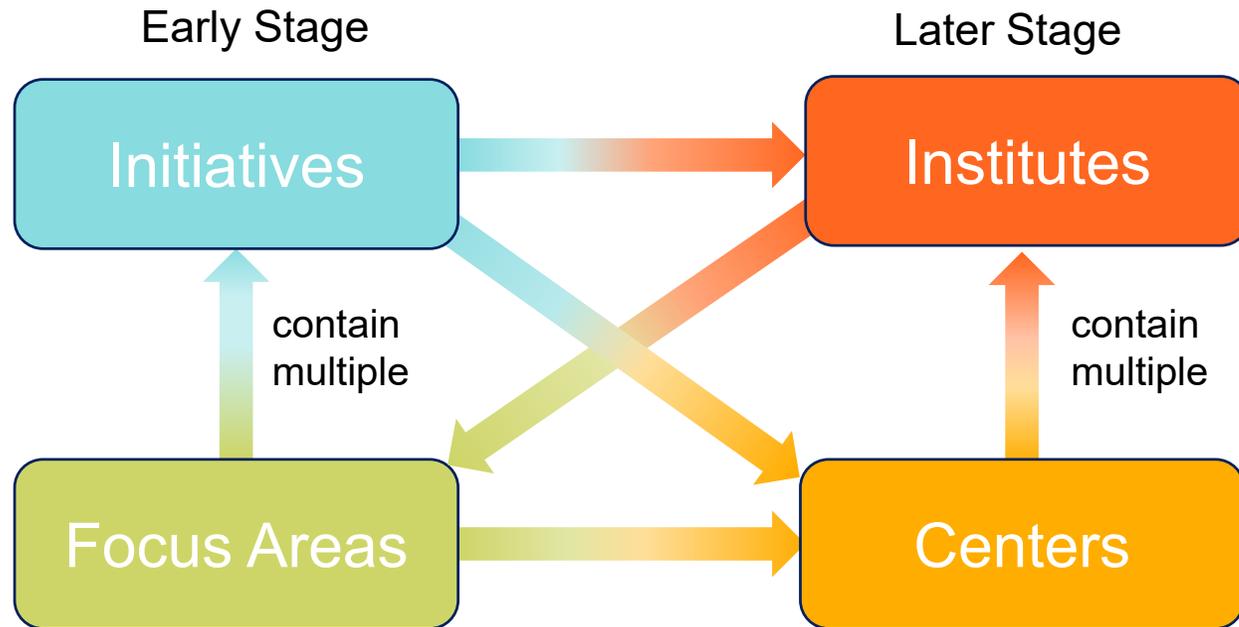
Students work for companies in their capacity as USA employees, gaining valuable experience.

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USA Research Initiatives

LIFECYCLE APPROACH



Initiatives involve 50-75 faculty
Focus Areas involve 12 faculty or less

Initiatives eventually may become **Institutes**
Focus Areas eventually may become **Centers**
Conglomerations of **Centers** align to **Institutes**

USA Research Initiatives Provide:

- Communities for Interdisciplinary Collaboration
- Marketing Framework
 - Putting similar things together to amplify impact
 - Market Initiatives and Focus Areas
- Asset Organizational Framework
- Investment Framework
- Cluster Hiring Framework
- Points of collaboration for industry and other external partners

What are we good at?
What services can we support?
Where and what are our assets?
Where do we need to make institutional investment?
Who can I collaborate with?
Do we have the resources to work on a large proposal/project?

Starting Point: Six Possible Initial Interdisciplinary Research Initiatives for USA



Life, Health and Well-Being

Clinical Trials and Translational Medicine
Center for Clinical and Translational Science
Precision Medicine
Mitchell Cancer Institute
Center for Healthy Communities
Center for Lung Biology
Behavioral Health and Trauma Informed Care
Center for Generational Studies



Coastal and Marine

Hurricane Mitigation
Sustainable Fisheries
Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Coastal Engineering
Microplastics



Systems, Technology and Automation

Industrial Robotics
Autonomous Vehicles
Supply Chain
Remote Sensing



Workforce Intelligence

Healthcare Workforce
AI Workforce Enhancement
Predictive Labor Analytics
Human-Automation Strategy
Adaptive Credentials



Secure Computing and AI

AI Driven Precision Diagnostics
Secure Industrial Control Systems
Secure Post-Quantum Systems
Digital Forensics and Malware Analysis
Privacy Preserving Health Analytics

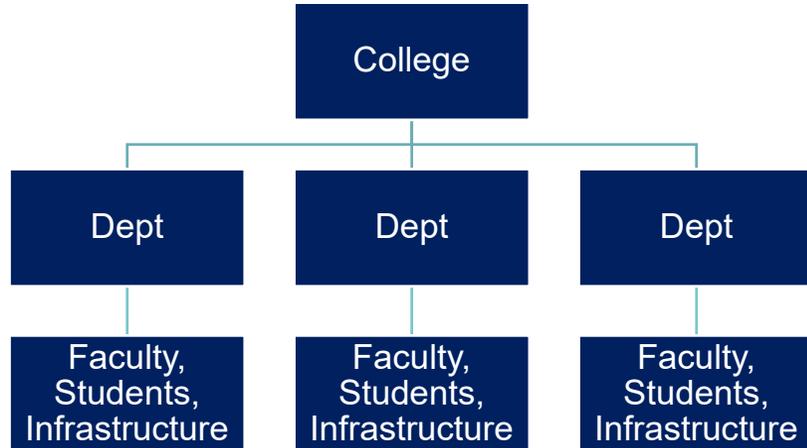


Energy and Sustainability

Carbon Capture and Energy Storage (SAILL)
Next-Generation Solar Technologies
Smart Grids and Distributed Generation
Alabama Mobility and Power Center (w/UA)

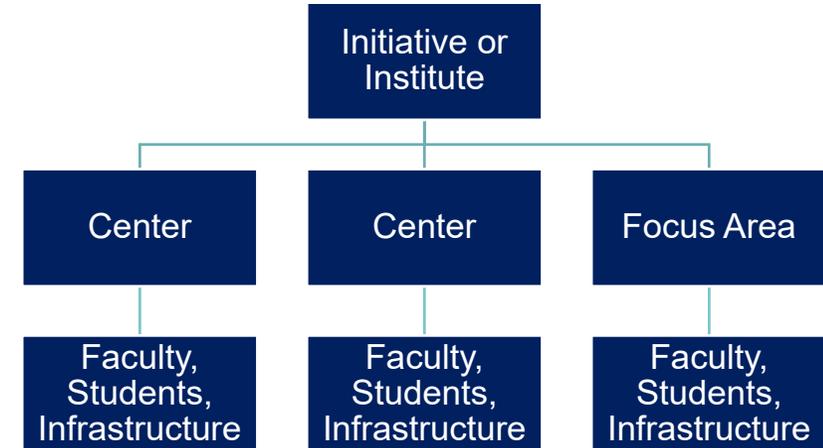
One University, Two Views: A “Both-And” Approach

Disciplinary



Whiddon College of Medicine
College of Nursing
Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health
College of Engineering
College of Education and Professional Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Mitchell College of Business
USA Health
School of Computing
Honors College

Interdisciplinary



Energy and Sustainability
Coastal and Marine Resources
Life, Health and Well-Being
Systems, Technology and Automation
Secure Computing and Artificial Intelligence
Workforce Intelligence

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USA Foundry - Five Strategic Goals

Self-Funded Growth

Generate revenue through equity portfolios, reinvesting returns into University and Health System without increasing tuition or patient fees.

Dual Entrepreneurship Paths

Internal path for USA researchers to commercialize inventions. External "Reverse Pitch" for startups solving our institutional challenges.

Innovation Brand

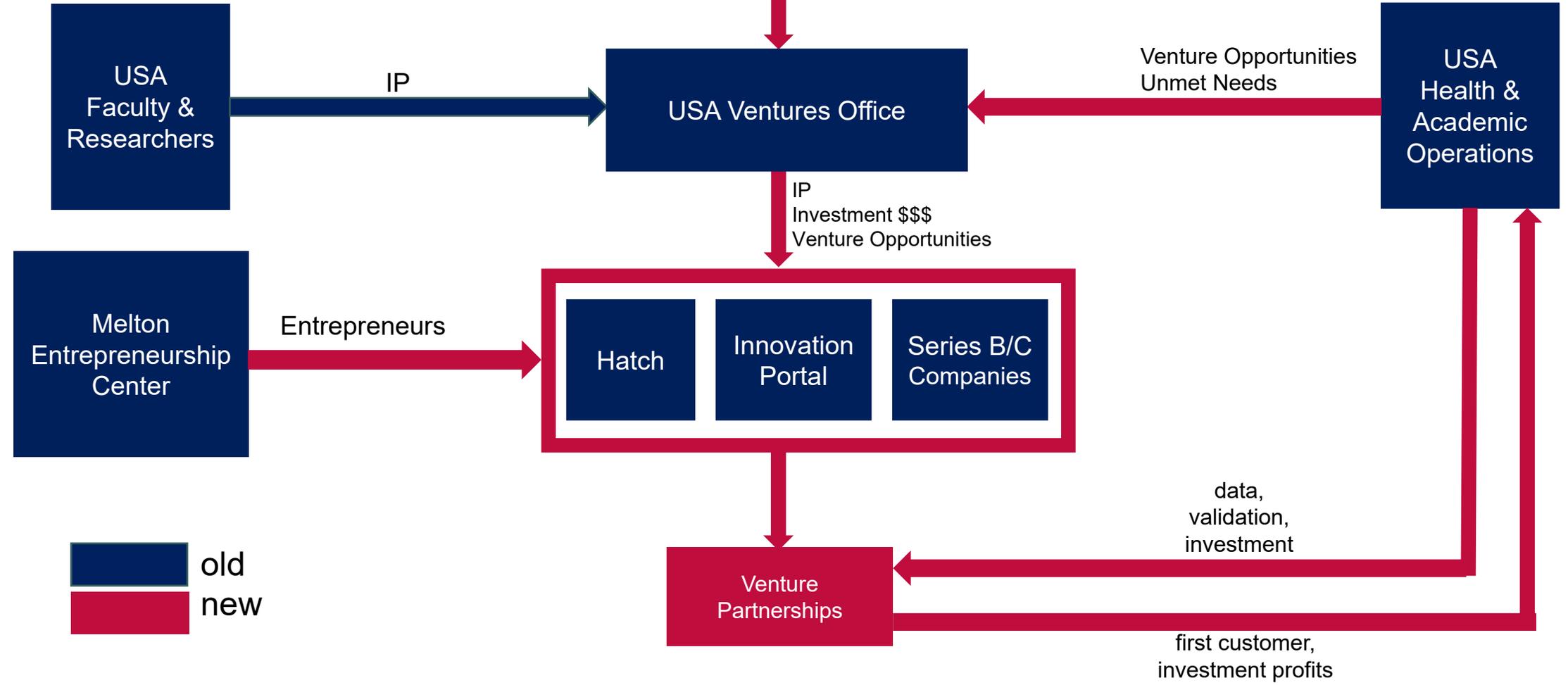
Transform USA into a "Campus of the Future" where patients access cutting-edge care and students experience startup energy.

Student Opportunities

Meaningful entrepreneurship engagement and experiential learning through internships at ecosystem companies.

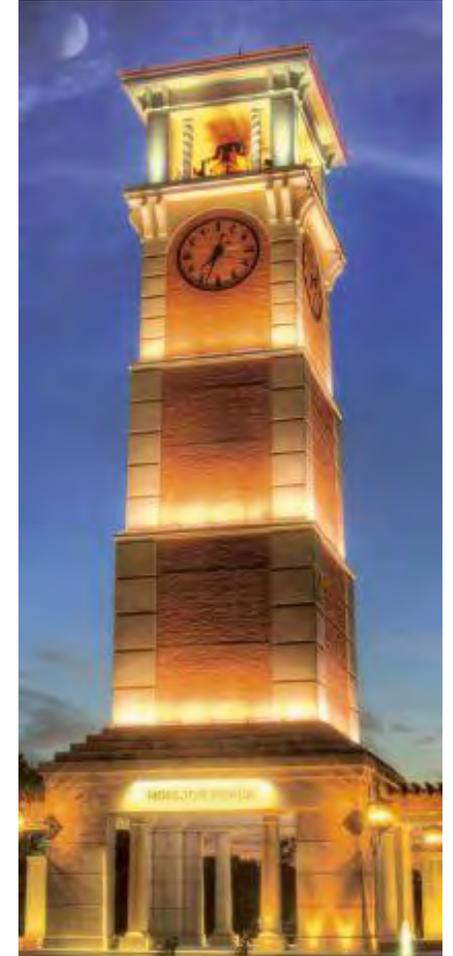
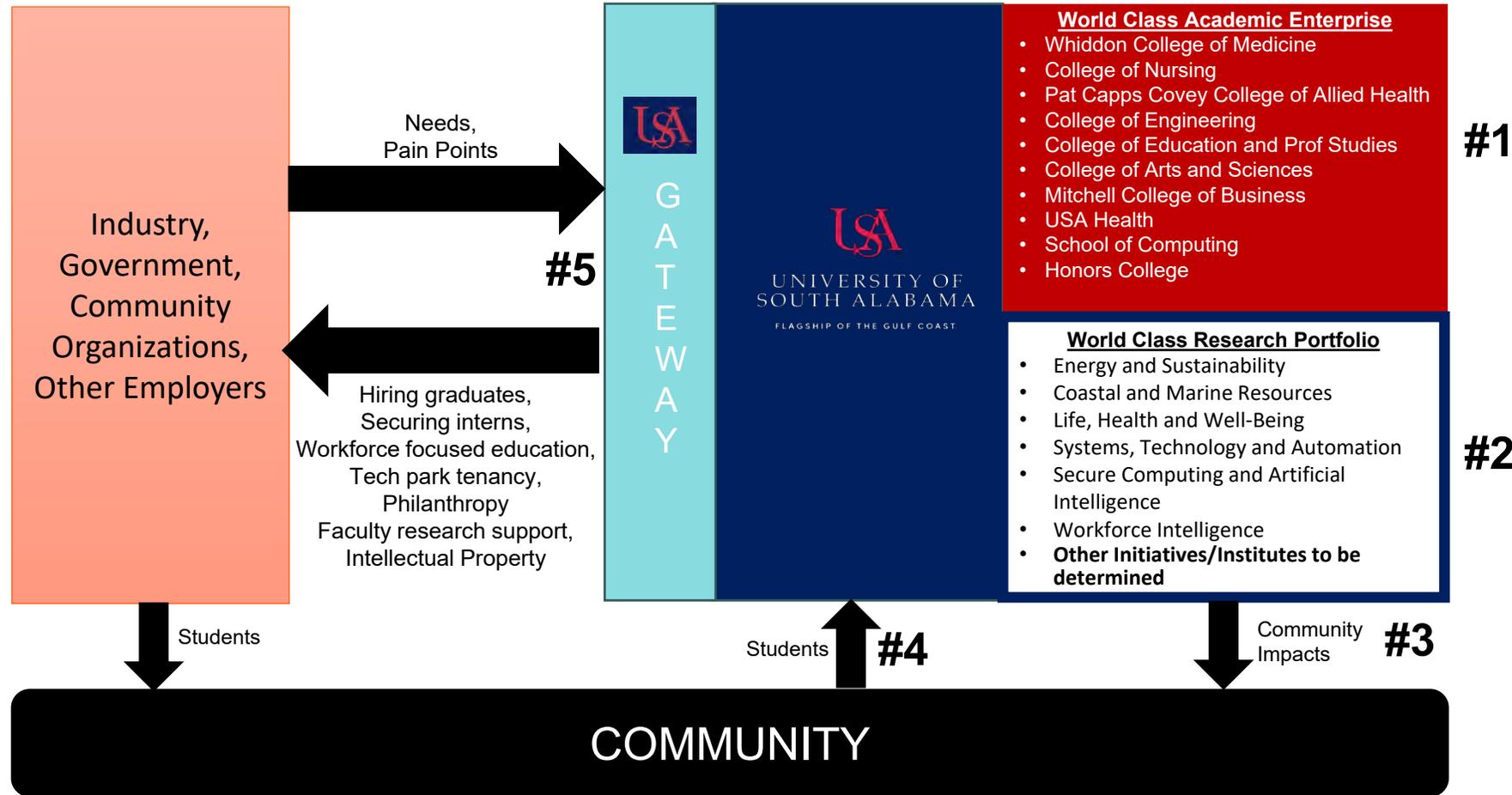
Regional Anchor

Partner with Hatch Fairhope and Innovation Portal to keep top graduates in the Gulf Coast region.



What Is an Optimal Outcome?

#6 Alignment



Serving the region, state and nation as the Flagship of the Gulf Coast



Audience Q&A

Upcoming ORED Events

- Research Networking Mixer: March 25, 5:30-7:30pm at the Strada Center
- Annual Research Appreciation Reception: April 16, 4-6pm at the Faculty Club
Please nominate your colleagues for our new awards!
- Action Planning Sessions (dates and invitations forthcoming)



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