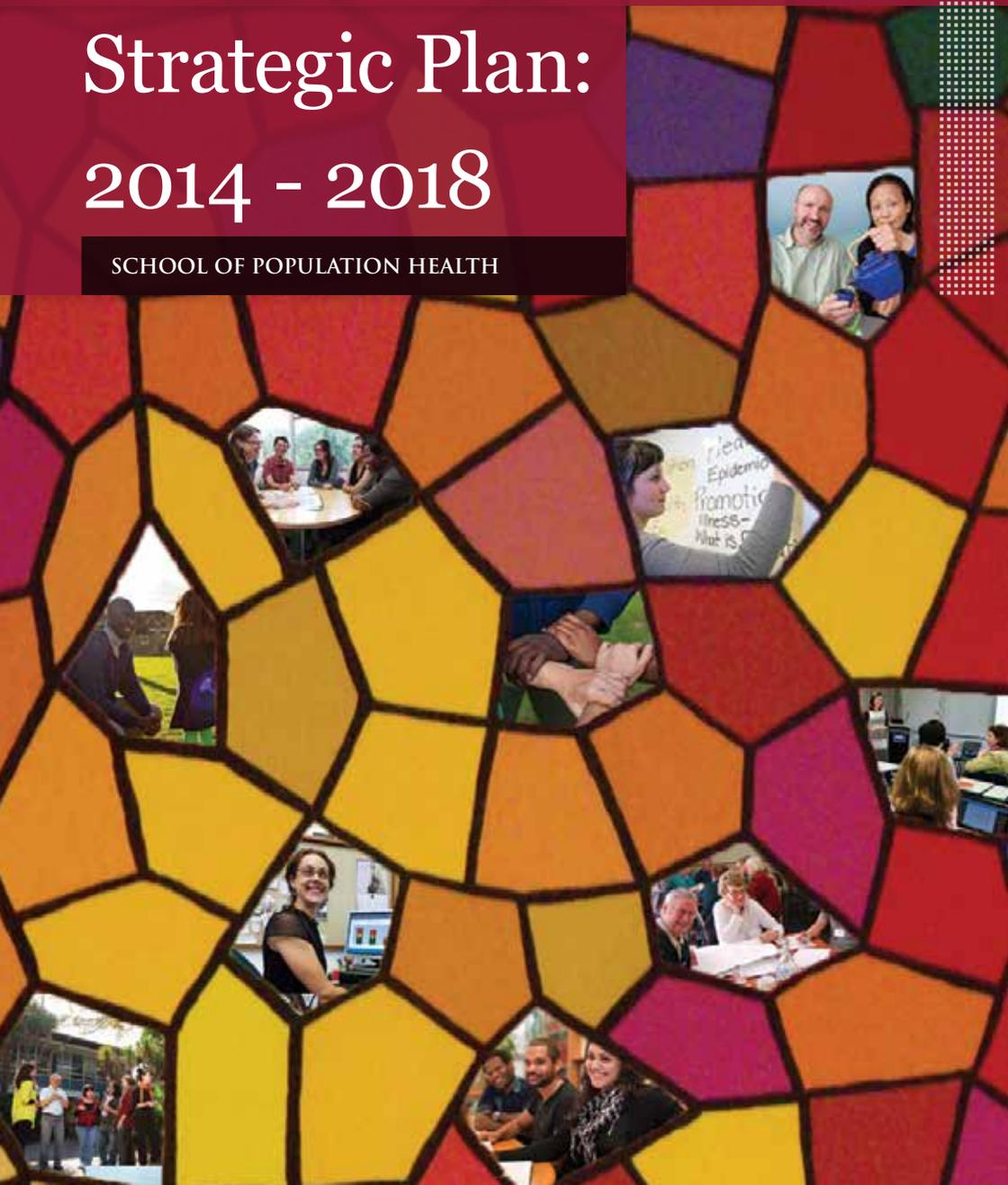THE UNIVERSITY OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

FACULTY OF MEDICINE, DENTISTRY AND HEALTH SCIENCES

# Strategic Plan:

# 2014 - 2018

## SCHOOL OF POPULATION HEALTH

The School of Population Health in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at The University of Western Australia is a research-intensive academic organisation giving material expression to the belief that excellence in research underpins excellence in teaching and community partnerships.

The School has a reputation for a strong evidence-based approach to research and education that is used for policy and practice development. SPH aspires to be a school in which staff and students feel valued and supported in their individual and collective efforts to improve community health and wellbeing

This Strategic Plan sets out the vision of our School for the next five years. It builds on the successes previously achieved and future challenges identified, and reflects the wider range of disciplinary groups, courses and research.

# Our Mission

We will influence policy and practice to improve the health and wellbeing of communities and people through leadership, discovery and communication.

# Our Values and Principles

**Our work is characterised by the following:**

↘  Integrity: supporting standards which promote honesty, transparency and accountability in teaching and research.

↘  Innovation: creating and supporting creative and inclusive approaches to knowledge discovery and to educating and inspiring students.

↘  Working in partnerships: with organisations, professional bodies, community groups and individuals to enhance the quality, relevance and usefulness of our education and research activities.

↘  Diversity: embracing and building on diverse perspectives, cultures and practices to enhance knowledge and reduce inequalities and marginalisation.

↘  Leadership: being willing to challenge the status quo and to maintain a profile as effective, creative and innovative as well as leading an outcome-focused organisation.

↘  Ethos: valuing the commitment and contribution of  staff and students in their individual and collective efforts to improve community health and wellbeing.

**This enables us to work towards:**

↘  Achieving excellence in our research and teaching endeavours;

↘  Optimising the impact of our education, research and research translation efforts on policy, organisations and practice;

↘  Ultimately promoting Social Justice and Equity through having a meaningful impact on contemporary societies, communities and individuals; and

↘  Discernibly enhancing beneficial outcomes for the wider community.

# Our Vision

**We will be an academic research and teaching organisation that is:**

↘ Locally, nationally and internationally known for the generation of knowledge used to address contemporary issues in health and social policy and practice.

↘ Consolidating its strongly established research and teaching collaborations with research partners nationally and internationally.

↘ Strengthening the School's existing international recognition in rigorous research.

↘ Strengthening its research foundation by increasing interdisciplinary approaches that enable a comprehensive analysis of complex health and social problems and associated interventions.

↘ Meeting the needs of a changing and diverse student body with innovative and accessible methods of teaching delivery that are underpinned by inter-professional and interdisciplinary approaches.

↘ Working in partnership within the School, and with stakeholders including consumers and community, government, industry and academic partners to develop opportunities in and enrich research and learning practices and outcomes.

↘ Effectively using a range of strategies including digital communication technologies to promote within UWA and externally the School and its programs and extend research opportunities.

↘ Embracing greater diversity in its research and teaching programs, student and staff and the range of expertise and geographic locations of its partners.

↘ Empowering its staff and students to attain high levels of achievement through ongoing skills enhancement, career development opportunities and mentoring.

↘ Supporting a culture of school activities that bring staff and students together to share and develop research and education initiatives (e.g. seminar program) attuned to positive community outcomes.

The Plan sets out goals in four key areas, each area having a series of goals that aim to further build the School's strengths and strategically progress new areas for future development:

↘ Teaching and Learning

↘ Research and Research Training

↘ Partnerships: Community, Academic and Industry

↘ People and Resources.

# TEACHING AND LEARNING

We will develop and strengthen coursework curricula to attract and retain a wide range of students who will become effectively prepared graduates for future studies and careers.

## Goal 1

We will expand the methods of course work delivery to reach a greater number of students and enhance their learning opportunities and experience.

This will include:

↘ Continuing to value excellence in teaching and learning and to support staff in achieving excellence in the teaching and learning environment;

↘ Ensuring staff are familiar with and access the expanding range of digital technologies that offer new avenues for student learning;

↘ Creating and responding to opportunities for our existing units to be included in courses within the University and in courses offered through partnership with other universities;

↘ Expanding our inter-professional education and learning for students through greater collaboration within the School, Faculty and University;

↘ Seeking and responding to student and wider industry feedback as we deliver new programs and units in increasingly differing formats;

↘ Identifying areas of teaching innovation within the School and support the expansion of such innovations;

↘ Identifying and developing strategies and actions to improve the processes of organising student placements, supporting students and supervisors and increasing placement opportunities.

# Goal 2

**We will increase the profile and promotion of our programs.**

This will include:

↘ Emphasising our excellence in teaching and learning to prospective students;

↘ Identifying and implementing a range of School-wide and course-specific marketing strategies to better promote the courses and units;

↘ Identifying and implementing a range of targeted strategies which raise awareness of the School's undergraduate and postgraduate courses with specific stakeholders and potential students (e.g. Department of Health, Department of Child Protection and Family Support, career counsellors, not-for-profit organisations);

↘ Further engaging industry partners offering practice-based education and placements to students.

# Goal 3

**We will rationalise and consolidate SPH teaching.**

This will include:

↘ Contributing to the graduate medical degree program (MD) through a Population Health Science curriculum and health-related scholarly activities;

↘ Continuing to consolidate joint teaching and units across the SPH courses and increasing the availability for other students in the Faculty and University to undertake SPH units;

↘ Continuing to increase the interdisciplinary contributions to teaching in relevant units;

↘ Identifying strategies for greater efficiencies in teaching delivery.

## Goal 4

**We will increase accessibility and availability of short courses to meet professional development needs and provide pathways for further study.**

This will include:

↘ Conducting an industry and professional needs assessment to inform the viability of creating and reshaping short courses which can be articulated into our postgraduate programs;

↘ Consolidating existing short courses and piloting new professional development courses;

↘ Regularly reviewing the developing industry and professional needs and challenges and reflecting these in our programs.

# RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING

We will improve our research capacity, outcomes and impact on policy and practice through application of our strengths including inter-disciplinary approaches, collaborations with research partners, and community and consumer involvement, to address complex health and social problems of priority at the State, national and international levels.

## Goal 5

**We will maintain a watching brief to identify areas of research funding and policy priority.**

We will keep ourselves well informed on priorities for research emerging from the NHMRC, ARC and Commonwealth and Western Australian Government Departments, National and State funding organisations and relevant philanthropic organisations and the Commonwealth and Western Australian Health Departments and national funding centres, and develop timely responses and actions to these signals.

## Goal 6

**We will target research where it counts most.**

We will strengthen our alignment with national priority research areas and the needs of vulnerable populations to ensure that a higher proportion of our research targets priority areas and draws on cross-disciplinary methods and inter-sectoral links to reduce disparities in health and wellbeing.

# Goal 7

**We will increase the number and success rate of funding applications.**

This will include:

- ↘ Targeting health and social issues that continue to exacerbate health inequalities for specific populations and communities including:
  - ↘ Indigenous Australians;
  - ↘ people in rural and remote areas;
  - ↘ people in socio-economically disadvantaged areas;
  - ↘ minorities, refugees, asylum seekers, newly arrived migrants and marginalised population groups;
  - ↘ people who experience mental ill health and other chronic diseases and disabilities; and
  - ↘ the frail and aged.

- ↘ Targeting chronic disease control.

- ↘ Focusing on evaluating policy directions and new models of program delivery in the areas of:
  - ↘ primary prevention and enhancing health and wellbeing;
  - ↘ primary medical, nursing and allied health care;
  - ↘ cross-cultural health and social programs;
  - ↘ multi-sectoral partnership approaches involving government and non-government organisations;

- ↘ Evaluation research focused on discipline specific teaching and learning approaches;
- ↘ Evaluation and action research focused on the approaches and outcomes of inter-professional learning practices.

- ↘ Implementing University- and School-based support and assistance mechanisms that increase the grant success rate across all areas of the School's research.

- ↘ Identifying strategies to further research via the known research funding bodies and opportunistic funding for research and evaluation through government calls for research and philanthropic bodies, which can build progression to nationally competitive grants.

- ↘ Supporting and mentoring of early career researchers, and succession planning.

# Goal 8

**We will promote the School's reputation as a leader in research to inform and improve health and social policies and interventions, resulting in enhanced community outcomes.**

This will include:

↘ Increasing the use of the model of the research process that is 'translation-ready' through continuing engagement of industry partners, community interests and peak bodies at all stages, including conception, design, conduct, reporting, knowledge synthesis and translation into policy and practice;

↘ Developing School-based strategies which can increase the translational outcomes of research applications for staff and higher degree research (HDR) students;

↘ Developing the capacity of our staff and partners in research methods, including:
   ↘ community intervention
   ↘ case distribution designs
   ↘ advanced data linkage methods
   ↘ clinical epidemiology
   ↘ translational interactive collaborative investigation models
   ↘ program evaluation
   ↘ professional practice research
   ↘ participatory and action research
   ↘ mixed methods research;

↘ Strengthening existing and developing new collaborations to enable applications for partnership research funding schemes and industry specific funding schemes;

↘ Encouraging staff representation on international, national and State governance structures, advisory or expert groups will be encouraged where it directly furthers the School's influence and participation on policy, organisation and practice development.

# Goal 9

**We will increase the diversity of the HDR student body.**

We will enhance recruitment efforts for HDR students with a view to increasing the quality and diversity of students admitted to HDR programs.

This will include:

↘ Increasing our  understanding the motivations of international students to take up study in Australia and the School;

↘ Providing increased academic support to research students from under-represented populations.

# Goal 10

**We will foster innovative research.**

To provide a School environment where research innovation can thrive the School will pursue processes and practices which support staff and students in their research performance.

This will include:

For staff:
- Assisting early career researchers to develop their track record and win research grants through financial assistance, mentoring by established senior researchers and peer support programs;

- Implementing a training program to up-skill researchers in new research approaches and methodologies and assist researchers to attend courses and conferences:

- Providing research support including methodological and procedural support;

- Implementing mechanisms to facilitate cross disciplinary research;

- Supporting activities that showcase research achievements and outcomes.

For students:
- Encouraging research students to attend relevant seminars and development opportunities;

- Promoting seminars to students;

- Engaging and assisting international and regional/rural students;

- Reviewing and improving the School induction process for new international and domestic students to ensure students are familiar with the culture, processes, supports and expectations of the School;

- Advising and supporting students to develop their research networks for future career development.

# Goal 11

**We will strengthen and expand our collaborations to increase our research scope, initiatives and contribution.**

This will include:



↘ Reviewing existing research partnerships and how they can be developed or extended;

↘ Formalising currently valued research focussed collaborations of the School as a means of supporting the partnership for future research applications;

↘ Identifying key research topics which can involve creating new interdisciplinary, multi-institutional and multi-national academic partnerships with researchers in SPH, the Faculty, the University, Australia and overseas and mobilise our adjunct academic workforce;

↘ Awarding staff sabbaticals to enable the development of research priorities and partnership development;

↘ Identifying potential and existing adjunct appointees and inviting/enhancing their participation in the life of the School through contributions to teaching and research supervision;

↘ Promoting SPH as a valuable host institution for visiting academics (sabbaticals, Raine fellowships);

↘ Developing closer relations with stakeholders, industry, universities, institutes, hospitals, not for profit and government organisations and sectors, to facilitate the development of strong research partnerships.

↘ Further developing active international research partnerships to increase opportunities for research grants and publications (see section on partnerships: international for details).

# PARTNERSHIPS: COMMUNITY, ACADEMIC AND INDUSTRY

**We will strengthen and expand community participation and partnership**

## Goal 12

**We will continue to value the perspectives of those people and their families who have experiences of the health and social issues about which we teach and research and to use a range of strategies to increase their participation in the development of the School's teaching and research.**

## Goal 13:

**We will support community participation as standard practice and will endeavour to increase community engagement in all elements of research including design, methodology and dissemination of research and its findings.**

This will include:

↘ Further involving the School's Consumer and Community Advisory Council through greater participation in School research and teaching in ways that use the Council's expertise and enable participation to become standard practice in teaching and research activities;

↘ Regularly evaluating the strategies used and the extent of consumer and community involvement;

↘ Appropriately supporting and developing for consumer and community representatives to build their skills, confidence and opportunities for involvement;

↘ Identifying areas in the School for further consumer and community involvement;

↘ Ensuring a growing diversity of consumer and community members are engaged with the School in meaningful ways;

↘ Developing a range of evaluative mechanisms to identify the benefits of consumer and community participation.

# Goal 14

**We will forge strong partnerships and alliances as the platform for international research cooperation and create new paths for international students to engage in our postgraduate courses and research training.**

This will include:

↘ Leading and participating in the creation of multinational research consortia;

↘ Submitting more applications for research grants to support bi-national and multinational research projects;

↘ Initiating and cultivating an increased number of longer-term, bi-national relationships with compatible overseas research partners;

↘ Increasing involvement in the work of the World Health Organisation and international government and non-government organisations that are committed to similar research goals as SPH.

We will increase our relevance and appeal to international students by:

↘ Adopting a broader international perspective in our coursework units and research projects;

↘ Offering international and rural practicum opportunities;

↘ Drawing on international collaborations to recruit research students with joint supervision arrangements; and

↘ Engaging in reciprocal student and staff placements.

# Goal 15

**We will increase the School's inclusiveness and responsiveness to diversity to enhance students' learning experiences and extend the School's international collaborations.**

This will include:

↘ Ensuring there are senior staff who are School champions who coordinate and support activities to this end, such as conducting needs assessments, including use of in-house and external expertise;

↘ Improving our understanding the motivations and constraints of international students, and the relative strengths and weaknesses of our competitors;

↘ Identifying opportunities for overseas research collaborations.

# Goal 16

**To increase and extend our impact on policy, organisation and practice with strong and effective partnerships.**

This will include:

↘ Documenting and evaluating our existing range of partnerships to identify good examples of how we can strengthen our partnerships both amongst the existing groups and in new areas;

↘ Identifying School-based strategies and processes that can develop, and provide support to strengthen partnerships;

↘ Identifying areas where new partnerships need to be established;

↘ Renewing and re-intensifying our relationships with key branches of the WA Department of Health, key clinical groups in major hospitals, Government departments, and organisations responsible for Social Policy as well as identify new industry and community partners in human services and health agencies and more broadly, local government, planning and transport and the private sector.

# Goal 17

**We will incorporate innovative models of working together.**

This will include negotiating innovative models for collaboration with industry partners, involving:

↘ partnership charters that define common objectives;

↘ partner-nominated research priorities;

↘ formation of internal multi-disciplinary teams to service partner needs;

↘ preparation of joint grant applications with partner funding;

↘ strategic research student and staff recruitment with partner funding; and

↘ responses to partners' learning needs.

## Goal 18:

**We will further develop our strategies to build relationships with our School alumni.**

This will include:

- ↘ Developing a contact register of our coursework and research training graduates;

- ↘ Sending Alumni School newsletters and invitations to School events;

- ↘ Supporting the various disciplinary Alumni Associations and their activities including reunions;

- ↘ Identifying opportunities for Alumni grant applications to further promote alumni;

- ↘ Encouraging the formation of a postgraduate Alumni association; and

- ↘ Engaging with the Alumni in cultivating new research and teaching opportunities.

## Goal 19:

**We will incorporate staff recognition for working in partnerships.**

This will include:

- ↘ A workload formula mechanism that recognises the time commitment of staff contributing to key decision-making bodies of the University and industry partners, as well as working in support of community and health advocacy groups;

- ↘ Appropriate acknowledgement and publicity of these achievements in internal publications and in external media.

## Goal 20

**We will trial a model of School Champions to strengthen areas of the School's priority developments.**

There are existing structures within the School to support activities such as research development and consumer and community involvement; trialling a champions model extends this approach so that priorities identified, e.g. supporting international students' learning experiences, become issues where there is whole of School engagement and development and progress identified.

# PEOPLE AND RESOURCES

We will foster leadership in people and resources through promoting a school identity that embraces its diversity, and creating a stimulating and effective work environment, in order that we enhance our ability to impact positively on the health and well-being of the community.

## Goal 21

We will foster the next generation by attracting and developing graduates who will make significant contributions to the health and wellbeing of communities and individuals.

This will include:

↘ Investing greater effort in fostering the next generation of research and teaching staff by engaging high achieving students and innovative practitioners and clinicians in our School, providing opportunities for new and established staff and implementing mentoring and succession plans.

## Goal 22

We will provide greater opportunities for individuals and teams to extend their research expertise and skills.

This will include:

↘ Implementing recommendations emerging from the surveys of staff and postgraduate research students to identify research skills, training and development needs;

↘ Implementing  mutually beneficial research mentoring process;

↘ Involving teaching staff as active research collaborators;

↘ Providing staff and postgraduate students with necessary research and research-related training;

↘ Building the next generation of researchers through the support, development and training of ECRs

↘ Supporting established academics in acquiring new skills;

↘ Fostering the connectivity with community health and wellbeing needs and feedback through enhanced community engagement in research, including through the C&CAC; and

↘ Increasing our research relationships with researchers working in government and non-government organisations.

## Goal 23

**We will consolidate effective administrative processes and identify areas for development to respond to the teaching and research needs of the School, Faculty and University.**

This will include:

↘ A School review of professional and technical support needs to meet the changing demands and priorities in teaching and research;

↘ Developing an operational plan and as appropriate trial new professional support models within the School to support academic staff and students.

## Goal 24

**We will develop our professional and technical support staff into an expert, multi-skilled, flexible workforce with diverse and stimulating employment roles and sound knowledge of School teaching and research program requirements.**

This will include:

↘ Supporting professional development opportunities for professional and technical support staff to enhance their existing knowledge and skills and encourage their attraction and retention within the School;

↘ Providing appropriate staff training to enhance systems and take account of the changing environment including the use of new technologies (e.g. online learning).

## Goal 25:

**We will promote the School's profile for teaching and research excellence through extending and improving marketing efforts.**

This will include:

↘ Raising awareness of the range of courses available within SPH and promoting the outcomes of our graduates through the development of specific products such as videos and e-newsletters;

↘ Raising the profile of the range and impact of SPH research;

↘ Raising the profiles of our educators and researchers and the news of their successes;

↘ Increasing profile and awareness through creating specific SPH and discipline marketing products, an upgraded web presence, quality webpage journalism, search-responsive web technology and web-based communication technologies including e-mail advertising, e-newsletters and downloadable podcasts.

## Goal 26

**We will renew the brand identities of our coursework units and courses to appeal to a wider range of prospective students and respond to emerging workforce and industry needs.**

This will include:

↘ Enhanced marketing of our postgraduate programs inside the University and externally;

↘ Engaging with professional development needs of practitioners and policy makers in government and non-government organisations;

↘ Meeting career planning needs and expectations of prospective high school and undergraduate students;

↘ Effectively  using social and conventional media (refer Goal 25);

↘ Taking opportunities to promote the SPH brand, and market and advertise at conferences, seminars and other appropriate events.

Cover artwork by Christina Davies, photoshopping by Melissa Jones.

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