Mason Gross School of the Arts

Future Roadmap

Spring 2022

RUTGERS

Mason Gross School
of the Arts

From the Dean

The Mason Gross Future Roadmap, which lays out a path for the school's evolution over the next five years, represents countless hours of thoughtful discussion and deliberation informed by faculty, staff, students, and alumni, with input from university colleagues, supporters, and community partners. Such conversations began more than a year into a global pandemic that highlighted inequities rooted deep in society and that caused severe disruption in the arts, bringing into sharp focus many of the challenges that 21st-century artists and scholars are called to confront.

The Roadmap's core pillars of **Inclusive Excellence, Collaboration,** and **Community** reflect our collective belief that the arts are vital to addressing the most pressing issues of our time. We must fully unlock

the transformative potential of the arts to engage communities and to deliver on the promise of a leading public research university such as Rutgers to serve the State of New Jersey and the wider world. Our process was guided by another set of conversations occurring across Rutgers–New Brunswick, namely those that have led to the creation of its Academic Master Plan, whose pillars helped shape those of the Roadmap. Also informing our discussion—and evident in the Roadmap goals—was a parallel effort to establish a Mason Gross Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan, which has recently been completed and which was inspired by a university-wide process, as well.

I am incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed to this Future Roadmap, especially those members of the steering committee who were primarily responsible for its outcome. The path forward is bold, positioning Mason Gross to emerge as a global leader in the arts and in the quest to cultivate a world that is more equitable, more empathetic, and more joyful.

Jason Geary
Dean, Mason Gross School of the Arts

The Future Roadmapping Process

In September 2021, Dean Jason Geary convened a steering committee to lead the Future Roadmapping initiative. This committee included faculty representatives from all five Mason Gross departments, the school's Equity Advisor, and staff members from Admissions and Student Affairs.

The members of the steering committee were:

Kara Cabrera, Assistant Dean for Admissions and Enrollment Management
Christopher Cartmill, Associate Professor, Theater
Rebecca Cypess, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Chair of the steering committee
Kimberly Elliott, Assistant Professor, Dance *
Jeff Friedman, Associate Professor, Dance
Conrad Herwig, Professor, Music
Steffani Jemison, Associate Professor, Art & Design

Marshall Jones, Mason Gross Equity Advisor and Associate Professor, Theater
Caroline Key, Assistant Professor, Film
Cameron Knight, Associate Professor, Theater
Thomas Lennon, Assistant Professor, Film
Jacqueline Thaw, Associate Professor, Art & Design
Kristen Wallentinsen, Assistant Professor, Music

* Kimberly Elliott passed away on March 23, 2022. We are grateful for the indelible mark that she left on our school, including through this planning process.

The steering committee met monthly and coordinated the following initiatives during Fall 2021 to gather initial information:

September 2021: Schoolwide faculty/staff planning session
October 2021: Schoolwide faculty/staff meeting with current students and recent alumni
November 2021: Focus group with department chairs/directors
November 2021: Focus group with the Admissions Office
November 2021: Focus group with the Advisors and Student Success Counselors
November 2021: Focus group with members of the schoolwide and departmental committees on equity, diversity, and inclusion
November 2021: Focus group with the Mason Gross Student Governing Association

These planning sessions and focus groups identified key themes on which the steering committee sought input from the entire school community. This input was solicited by means of surveys distributed to Mason Gross faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The surveys were open in February 2022 and achieved robust participation, with 70 faculty respondents, 34 staff respondents, 214 student respondents, and 321 alumni respondents. Based on the information provided, the steering committee drafted statements of mission, vision, and core values, as well as "pillar goals" and "specific goals" to inform central aspects of teaching, programming, research, and operations at Mason Gross for the next five years. This draft was shared and discussed at a schoolwide faculty/staff planning session in March 2022. Feedback on that draft resulted in a revised version, distributed to the faculty, staff, and students for further comment in April 2022. The final Future Roadmap was presented to the school in May 2022.
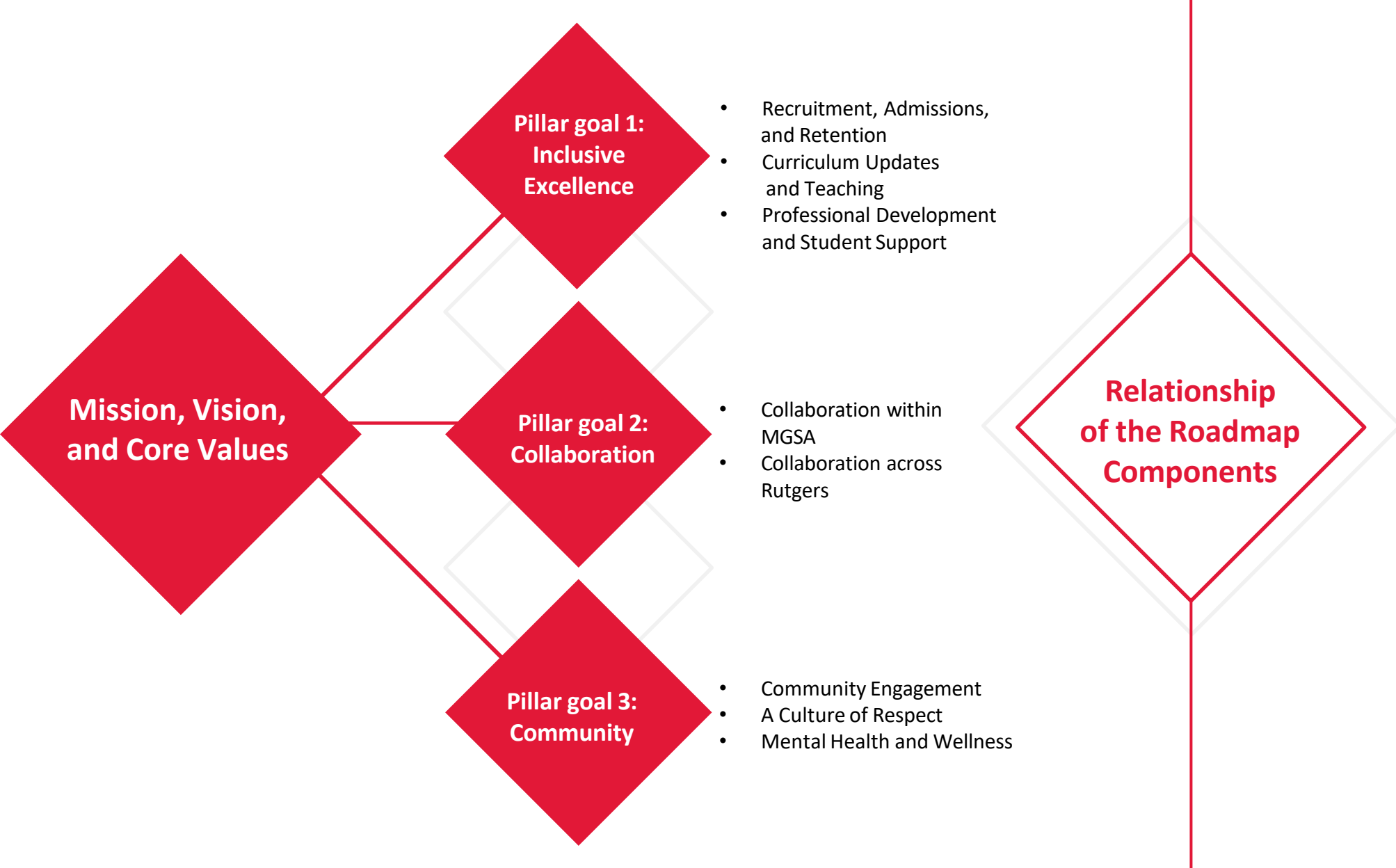
Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Pillar goal 1: Inclusive Excellence

- Recruitment, Admissions, and Retention
- Curriculum Updates and Teaching
- Professional Development and Student Support

Pillar goal 2: Collaboration

- Collaboration within MGSA
- Collaboration across Rutgers

Pillar goal 3: Community

- Community Engagement
- A Culture of Respect
- Mental Health and Wellness

Relationship of the Roadmap Components

Mission

Mason Gross School of the Arts nurtures curiosity, skill, critical thought, and innovation in creating art and scholarship that touches hearts, challenges minds, imparts joy, and awakens a sense of shared humanity. Embracing our distinctive identity as an arts conservatory within a leading public research university in a richly diverse region with a robust arts scene, we uphold the highest standards of inclusive excellence in artistry, pedagogy, and scholarship while affirming the role of the arts in shaping the world around us. We fulfill this mission by implementing curricula and programming that reflect the world's diverse artistic traditions, cultivating partnerships with schools and communities throughout New Jersey, creating art that is deeply connected to the social issues of our time, and advancing the arts across Rutgers through teaching, creative activity, advocacy, and collaboration in research that contributes to the public good.

Vision

Mason Gross School of the Arts strives to be a global leader in cultivating the arts to improve the human condition, forge connections among individuals and communities, and celebrate the diversity of our world.

We strive to create a school community in which all people feel respected, valued, and able to thrive. We adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct, and we do not tolerate harassment or discrimination.

Respect

Artistic Practice as a Form of Research

We view artistic practice and scholarly research as equally important and impactful forms of knowledge creation.

Core

We value art that is deeply engaged with the urgent issues of our society and that advances understanding of these issues through communication, reflection, and exploration.

Engagement

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

We recognize the historic, systemic injustices that have denied arts education and professional opportunities to marginalized peoples, and we work to rectify those injustices through the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. We actively cultivate varied perspectives within our school, and we embrace cultural diversity in our curriculum and programming. We strive to include and understand all voices by fostering a supportive environment.

Values

We encourage artistic and scholarly innovation through creative experimentation. We foster the flexibility that will allow us to adapt to an ever-changing artistic landscape.

Experimentation and Innovation

Access to the Arts

We seek to expand access to the arts through education, public programming, and community partnerships.

Pillar goals

Inclusive excellence: In our teaching, learning, research, and programming, we will articulate and achieve a vision of artistic and academic excellence that nurtures all perspectives and that reflects the priorities of our school community, our local environment in the university and the state of New Jersey, and broader conversations on the national and international stages.

Collaboration: We will develop and implement systems of collaboration that bring our disciplines and practices into dialogue with one another, with other disciplines at the university, and with the communities in which we are embedded.

Community: We will foster a sense of community within our school and forge partnerships with local communities that increase access to the arts and bring the arts to bear on the pressing issues of our time and place.

Inclusive excellence

1. Recruitment, Admissions, and Retention
- Increase **transparency** of the student admissions and scholarship processes.
- Ensure that student admissions criteria assess **potential** as well as current levels of achievement.
- Study how well our admissions processes predict **student success**, a key pillar of the Rutgers-New Brunswick Academic Master Plan.
- Partner with NJ public schools and Rutgers Community Arts to **expand youth arts education** and build **pipelines** to MGSA.
- Enact the goals around recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff outlined in MGSA's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategic Plan.

2. Curriculum Updates and Teaching
- Revisit program- and course-level **learning goals** to ensure that they reflect our core values and current thinking in artistic expression and thought.
  - o Enact the goals around cultural awareness in teaching and learning outlined in MGSA's EDI Strategic Plan.
  - o Embrace emerging technologies as an ever-changing aspect of artistry.
- Reduce **student stress** without compromising rigor.
- Explore **career readiness** and **community engagement** as components of the curriculum.
- Ensure that BA students feel included and envision career pathways that incorporate the arts.
  - o Explore the potential for increased enrollment in the BA programs stemming from greater inclusiveness and interdisciplinary approaches.

- Expand access to meaningful arts experiences in nonmajor courses.
    - Explore the potential for increased enrollment in nonmajor courses owing to expanded arts experiences.
    - Ensure a seamless partnership between the departments and Rutgers Arts Online.
- Determine the viability of **graduate programs** on hiatus and the appropriate proportion of graduate to undergraduate students.
- Develop a plan to address **technology needs** across MGSA.
- Develop a plan to address maintenance and accessibility of **facilities** such as classrooms, studios, practice rooms, communal spaces, and spaces for performance and exhibition across MGSA.

3. Professional Support and Development

- Leverage the Office of Advising and Student Success, as well as our community of alumni and other resources at the university, to provide excellent student support, including **professional development**.
- Solidify the infrastructure to support research and grant-seeking across MGSA, with special attention to the needs of students and pre-promotion faculty.
    - Enact the goals around programming, scholarship, and creative practice outlined in MGSA's EDI Strategic Plan.
- Ensure that faculty have access to **pedagogical training and mentorship** towards promotion.
- Ensure that staff have access to professional development opportunities and that supervisors provide mentoring related to **career advancement**.

Collaboration

1. Collaboration within MGSA
- Implement and build on *Mason Gross Interplay* and the Dramaturgy concentration by exploring the creation of **interdepartmental electives and programs**, such as arts administration, arts technology, arts education, and community arts engagement.
- Explore the formulation of policies to encourage cross-departmental and **collaborative teaching and research**.
- Explore the creation of structures to foster **cross-departmental performance and exhibition**, such as a school wide production shop.

2. Collaboration Across the University
- Recognizing the impact that the arts can have on other disciplines and on society's challenges, advance **arts-integrated research, pedagogy, and programming** across the university.
    - Build on MGSA's nascent collaboration with the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences to bring the arts to bear on the university's efforts to address environmental issues such as climate change.
    - Explore other pedagogical initiatives that could be mapped onto any of our programs, e.g. a certificate or minor in arts administration, arts + public health, etc.

Community

1. Community Engagement
- Explore community engagement as a component of the **curriculum** (see "Curriculum Updates and Teaching").
- Expand community engagement initiatives across the school, leveraging the infrastructure of Rutgers Community Arts and our nascent relationship with the Arts Institute of Middlesex County to encourage our students to **share their art** outside MGSA spaces.
- Enact the goals around community and alumni engagement outlined in MGSA's EDI Strategic Plan.

2. A Culture of Respect
- Implement MGSA's EDI Strategic Plan.
- Recognize contributions to **inclusive teaching** through Inclusive Teaching Grants and the creation of an **inclusive culture** through an Inclusive Community Award.
- Ensure access to workshops and development opportunities on **respectful workplace norms** for students, faculty, and staff.
- Leverage the Office of Advising and Student Success to promote students' sense of **belonging**, e.g., through programming and extra-curricular activities.

3. Wellness

- Maximize MGSA's relationship with **CAPS** to ensure that they provide the best possible support for our students.
- Explore and promote other resources at the university to assist our students, faculty, and staff with **emotional and mental health.**
- **Reduce student stress** without compromising rigor (see "Curriculum Updates").
- Communicate with university administration about the need to **reduce administrative burdens** on faculty and staff.

Next Steps: Implementing the Roadmap in the Next 1-5 Years

MGSA Implementation Committee communicates with all departments in September of each year about the goals of the Roadmap.

Departments translate the goals into action steps and determine how many years (between 1 and 5) each step will take.

Departments begin implementing each step. The Implementation Committee checks in periodically to assist with logistics and overcoming any obstacles.

Departments complete the steps for that year and take stock of longer-term goals.

Departments provide an update to the MGSA Implementation Committee in May of each year about what steps have been accomplished, what steps are in progress, and what steps will continue next year.