NC STATE
College of Education

THE WILLIAM & IDA
FRIDAY INSTITUTE
FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

Strategic Plan

2018-2023

Friday Institute Mission

Inspire, Innovate, Educate. These three timeless themes permeate the fabric of the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation and are engraved in the words and images of Bill and Ida Friday that grace our building. The mission of the Friday Institute is to bring together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and other community members to lead the transition from industrial-age schools to a personalized, flexible, technology-enhanced education system that will prepare students for success in further education, careers, and civic life in the global, digital-age world in which they live. Figure 1, from our work developing the North Carolina Digital Learning Plan, summarizes some of the major aspects of this transition at the classroom level.
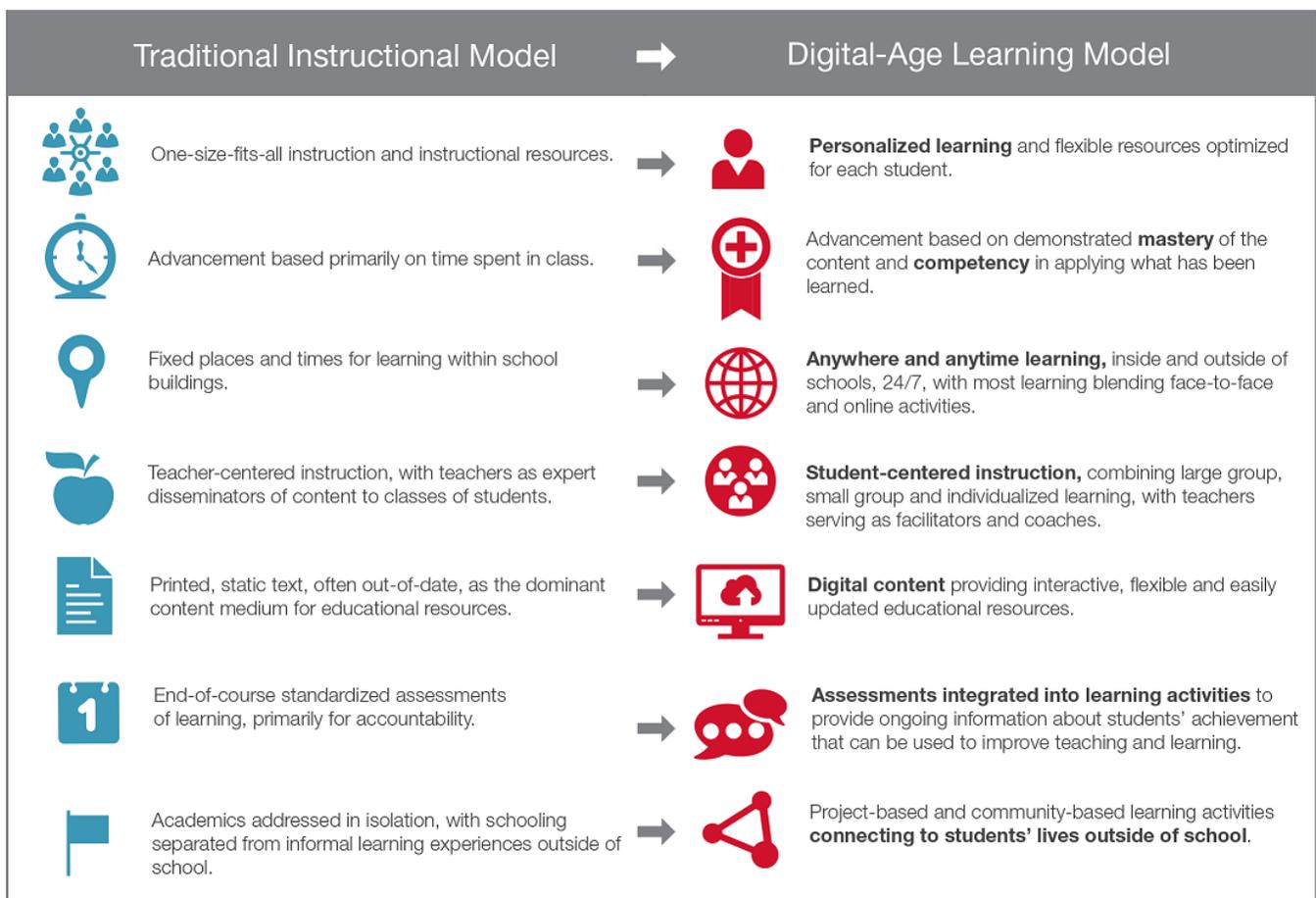

Traditional Instructional Model	➡	Digital-Age Learning Model
One-size-fits-all instruction and instructional resources.	➡	**Personalized learning** and flexible resources optimized for each student.
Advancement based primarily on time spent in class.	➡	Advancement based on demonstrated **mastery** of the content and **competency** in applying what has been learned.
Fixed places and times for learning within school buildings.	➡	**Anywhere and anytime learning,** inside and outside of schools, 24/7, with most learning blending face-to-face and online activities.
Teacher-centered instruction, with teachers as expert disseminators of content to classes of students.	➡	**Student-centered instruction,** combining large group, small group and individualized learning, with teachers serving as facilitators and coaches.
Printed, static text, often out-of-date, as the dominant content medium for educational resources.	➡	**Digital content** providing interactive, flexible and easily updated educational resources.
End-of-course standardized assessments of learning, primarily for accountability.	➡	**Assessments integrated into learning activities** to provide ongoing information about students' achievement that can be used to improve teaching and learning.
Academics addressed in isolation, with schooling separated from informal learning experiences outside of school.	➡	Project-based and community-based learning activities **connecting to students' lives outside of school**.

Figure 1: Comparing Traditional and Digital-Age Learning Models

Organization of the Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan broadly frames our goals and strategic areas of work. It updates our prior strategic plan; reflects contributions of our Leadership Team and our National Advisory Board; incorporates lessons from an organizational effectiveness study and our five-year review; and reflects input from stakeholders, partners, and collaborators. It provides directions that will inform our annual planning and ongoing decision-making, while allowing flexibility to address the changing educational landscape. We view this plan as a living document that will be modified as new priorities and challenges emerge.

The plan is organized around the following three major components, each addressed in one of the following sections:

A. Major Goals

B. Strategic Focus Areas

C. Organization Capacity Building

A. Major Goals

To further the transition to a digital-age education system, the goals for the work of the Friday Institute are to accomplish the following:

1. Conduct research and analyses that make significant contributions to the knowledge base on personalized, digital-age teaching and learning while addressing all aspects of the education system, from state and federal policies to practices that support the day-to-day learning of each student.

2. Play a central role in the transition to digital-age teaching and learning in North Carolina, with a specific emphasis on addressing the educational needs of underserved and at-risk students.

3. Build upon our work in North Carolina to influence the transition to digital-age teaching and learning in other states and countries.

4. Serve as a center for collaboration that brings together researchers from multiple disciplines, educators from both formal and informal educational organizations, policymakers, business leaders, designers, students, parents, and other community members engaged in the future of education.

5. Contribute to both the research and land-grant outreach roles of NC State University and its College of Education, and to the development of innovative, digital-age programs for NC State students.

6. Continue to develop the innovative and collaborative organizational culture that engages the expertise of a diverse, highly skilled, and dedicated staff to ensure high quality in all of the work of the Friday Institute.

B. Strategic Focus Areas

Our work centers on the critical challenges of creating the next-generation education system that is required to prepare all students for success in further education, careers, and civic life in the rapidly changing, global, digital world. Our strategic focus areas reflect our mission and goals, build upon our prior and ongoing work, and capitalize on the trust and recognition we've built in North Carolina and nationally. In each focus area, we take systemic approaches that incorporate the perspectives of practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and community members. Throughout our work, we address issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion, while engaging schools in low-income rural and urban communities in partnerships to address the needs of underserved and at-risk students.

Our current strategic focus areas are listed below. Each builds upon a solid foundation of prior and ongoing work, examples of which are listed for each focus area.

1. **Conduct foundational interdisciplinary research that contributes to the knowledge base about personalized, digital-age, technology-enhanced teaching and learning.**

   Some examples of our foundational work in this focus area include:

   - Multiple NSF-funded projects with colleagues in computer science and psychology to develop and conduct research on technology-enabled learning tools that include the use of virtual environments, intelligent tutors, and other leading-edge approaches.

   - Initiatives to develop and test innovative approaches to teaching and learning, with work spanning mathematics, science, language arts, computer science, data science, and digital literacies education.

   - Researcher-practitioner partnerships with schools and districts that address central issues about the transition to personalized digital-age teaching and learning.

   - National conferences, organized by the Friday Institute in collaboration with leading researchers and partner organizations, and summary reports and white papers we've prepared to inform researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

2. **Develop systemic, evidence-based plans to guide states, districts, and schools in their transitions to digital-age approaches to education.**

   Some examples of our foundational work in this focus area include:

   - The North Carolina Race to the Top proposal, in which we played a lead role, working with the state's Department of Public Instruction, State Board of Education, Office of Governor Perdue, and many others, in developing the proposal that received $400 million of funding from the U.S. Department of Education.

- Models and plans for implementing state-of-the-art, robust, cost-effective technology infrastructures and cloud computing systems that make connectivity and digital resources readily and equitably available to all students and teachers throughout North Carolina. This work has influenced plans in other states and at the federal level.

- The North Carolina Digital Learning Plan for K-12 schools, the implementation of which is now being supported by $6.4 million annually of state funding for the North Carolina Digital Learning Initiative.

- Contributions to planning the educational program and all related aspects of the new campus of the North Carolina School for Science and Mathematics (NCSSM).

3. **Develop, implement, and disseminate innovative research-based professional learning approaches to prepare education leaders for the transition to digital-age teaching and learning.**

    Some examples of our foundational work in this focus area include:

    - Professional learning programs for district and school leadership teams, as part of the NC Digital Learning Initiative, conducted in collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the state's principals' and superintendents' associations, and Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs).

    - Collaborations with state-based professional learning teams in over 14 states to provide the Leadership in Personalized and Digital Learning program throughout the U.S.

    - Contributions to the design and implementation of Future Ready Schools Institutes and resources for school leaders from throughout the country, in partnership with the Alliance for Excellent Education and the U.S. Department of Education.

    - Support of school and district initiatives that help prepare and guide school and district leaders to plan and implement digital-age teaching and learning in low-income counties throughout North Carolina, in collaboration with the Golden Leaf Foundation and other funders.

4. **Develop, implement, and disseminate innovative research-based models to prepare current and future teachers to implement digital-age approaches with their students.**

   Some examples of our foundational work in this focus area include:

   - A network of instructional coaches to support teachers in their transition to digital-age classroom practices, as part of the NC Digital Learning Initiative.

   - Free, open, online courses for teachers and teacher educators on topics including mathematics, computer science, and literacy education; leading educational innovations; and personalizing education for students with learning differences. These courses have also been the topic of research, including dissertations by NC State doctoral students.

   - Micro-credentials on topics ranging from learning differences to teaching mathematics, to implement and research competency-based approaches to professional learning.

   - Contributions to the development and the ongoing implementation of the College of Education's New Literacies and Global Learning M.Ed. program, Leadership Academy preparation programs for principals, and Pathway to Practice lateral entry program for teachers.

5. **Use rigorous research and evaluation methods to inform policymakers' and educators' decisions about the transition to a digital-age education system that provides effective, personalized learning for all students.**

   Some examples of our foundational work in this focus area include:

   - Research-practitioner and research-policymaker partnerships to conduct research on critical issues that will inform practice and policy decisions.

   - Evaluations of educational innovations to inform continuous improvement and future decisions about their use, in collaboration with schools and districts, university and museum scientists, foundations, and others.

   - A digital learning data clearinghouse and dashboard platform, in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, to inform school, district, and state decisions about digital learning initiatives.

   - Evaluation of the North Carolina Race to the Top initiatives, in collaboration with colleagues at other UNC system campuses, to inform decisions about continuing specific initiatives and to document lessons learned to inform policies and programs.

   - Independent, non-partisan research projects on North Carolina education policies to inform future improvement and funding in the areas of school choice, strategic staffing, virtual learning, and others.

6. **Lead programs that prepare students for success in their future education, careers, and civic life through collaborations with schools, museums, and other informal education organizations, community colleges, universities, government agencies, community-based organizations, private sector businesses, non-profit educational organizations, and other stakeholders.**

   Some examples of our foundational work in this focus area include:

   - Community-based partnerships that apply a collective action approach to further educational opportunities, engagement, and outcomes for underserved students.

   - The NC State Mathematics Science Education Network, which provides enrichment activities to help prepare underserved students in grades 6-12 for careers in education and STEM-related fields.

   - Partnerships with university scientists, science museums, and schools to bring cutting-edge research and citizen science approaches to students.

   - Large-scale online courses on Learning Differences for educators and students, focused on specific strategies to meet the needs of each student.

   - Support for implementation of the My Future NC initiative, led by UNC President Margaret Spellings, to build more coordination across the pre-K through university education system to further the attainment of North Carolina students.

7. **Contribute to innovations in research, teaching, and outreach in alignment with NC State University's mission and goals.**

   Some examples of our foundational work in this focus area include:

   - The Digital Transformation Cluster in the Chancellor's Faculty Excellence Program, in collaboration with colleagues in computer science and psychology.

   - Assistance to develop and strengthen digital-age undergraduate and graduate programs at the NC State College of Education.

   - Collaboration with business leaders and educators in China to develop schools that prepare Chinese students to succeed in college in the U.S. and other countries and provide opportunities for students from NC State and K-12 schools to have rich opportunities for global learning.

   - The Computer Science for All K-12 Students initiative, one of four interdisciplinary initiatives supported by NC State's Game-Changing Research Incentive Program.

C. Organization Capacity Building

Since opening in 2005, the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation has developed a respected and trusted leadership role for major education initiatives in North Carolina and has increasingly gained national recognition. To do so, we have recruited outstanding and diverse leadership and staff for both the programmatic and operational work of the Friday Institute and built a culture that supports innovation, collaboration, high productivity, continuous learning, and ongoing capacity building. This section of the strategic plan addresses actions that build upon our prior success to continue to build the capacity, collaborations, and positive culture of the Friday Institute.

1. **Engage additional skilled and dedicated individuals in all aspects of our work.**

   - Recruit and retain high-performing project, administrative, and technical staff with relevant expertise and diverse backgrounds to advance the work of the Friday Institute.

   - Engage College of Education and other NC State faculty and professional staff in advancing current initiatives and framing new areas of work.

   - Recruit talented graduate and undergraduate research assistants from the College of Education and other NC State colleges and engage them in activities that further their education and careers and contribute to the work of the Friday Institute.

   - Develop ongoing relationships with highly capable consultants and organizations to provide specialized expertise as needed to support the Friday Institute's programs and projects.

2. **Continue to develop an organization and management structure appropriate to the scale and range of our work.**

   - Further develop decision-making processes around strategic priorities, funding opportunities, and resource allocation.

   - Further develop efficient and flexible organizational, management, and financial structures; leverage state-of-the art technical capabilities; and engage in continuous improvement practices to streamline processes while meeting university, state and funder requirements.

3. **Support the ongoing learning and professional growth of associated faculty, researchers, staff, and students.**

   - Allocate resources to support professional development activities for the Friday Institute's project and operational staff and associated faculty and students.

   - Provide presentations, forums, and other activities that support ongoing learning for all involved in the work of the Friday Institute.

- Maintain an organizational culture that encourages mentoring, collaboration, and peer-supported learning.

4. **Sustain and extend close, ongoing working partnerships with schools and districts in both rural and urban areas.**

    - Engage teachers and leaders from partner schools and districts to contribute to the Friday Institute's project plans and resources.

    - Work with educators and administrators in every district in North Carolina, as well as hundreds of schools and districts across the country.

    - Collaborate with partner schools and districts to develop testbeds that will support the Friday Institute's projects and bring innovative learning opportunities to schools and districts.

    - Ensure that the Friday Institute staff embed the values of equity and inclusion in all of our work.

5. **Continue to develop collaborations to address critical education issues and to influence state, federal, and foundation initiatives.**

    - Encourage the Friday Institute staff to participate in commissions and committees addressing educational innovation and setting directions for state and national education initiatives.

    - Continue to extend the growing partnerships with museums, community-based organizations, community colleges, non-profit educational organizations, state departments of education, and other organizations, both within North Carolina and nationally, that have missions, expertise, and opportunities that complement those of the Friday Institute.

    - Convene cross-sector meetings and facilitate ongoing working groups to encourage productive collaborations among stakeholders.

    - Develop partnerships with publishers, technology companies, national membership organizations, and other non-profit organizations that have the capacity to disseminate and support programs at a large scale nationally.

6. **Establish additional sources of funding to support innovative work in selected focus areas across the research, practice, and policy perspectives.**

    - Explore new approaches and business models for supporting large-scale implementations of the Friday Institute's programs and resources, such as through open education resources and online/networked learning communities.

    - Continue to diversify the Friday Institute's funding to include additional state and federal agencies, private foundations, corporate partners, and fee-for-service offerings.

    - Cultivate ongoing and expanding relationships with current funders.