

# Innovation & Impact

Psychology Applied  
to a Complex World



# Welcome

The ultimate purpose of a graduate school of applied psychology—the shared goal of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends—is to strengthen people’s ability to lead fulfilling lives, to thrive, to manage challenges, heal wounds, and achieve aspirations. That in turn makes a fundamental contribution to building a healthy, productive society.

This strategic plan outlines how we will do this work over the next seven years. It is the follow-on to a previous five-year strategic plan, picking up where that plan left off. It is also reflective of where the Graduate School of Professional Psychology (GSPP) fits into the University-wide vision, *DU IMPACT 2025*, which is referenced throughout this document.

This plan is divided into three sections:

1. Backdrop
2. Executive Summary
3. Detailed Plan

Providing excellent, textured, and personalized education and clinical training is at the core of how we fulfill our mission. This was the focus of our 2013–2018 strategic plan, and we have been successful in creating an increasingly excellent and now unsurpassed student experience.

With *Innovation & Impact: Psychology Applied to a Complex World* we turn to a set of strategic initiatives which will broaden our reach and increase our value to our community writ large, while also further enriching the education we provide. At its core, our plan calls for the creation of an applied–research ecosystem, generating insights and sharing them with practitioners, partners, and the general public—making GSPP a go-to, high-value resource. As we broaden our reach, we also look to improve the environment for the practice of psychology, including fighting stigma and creating better access.

We are grateful to the many people who helped shape this vision and these priorities, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, the GSPP Board of Advisors, and a range of external stakeholders, including voices from community mental health organizations and corporations. We look forward to executing on this agenda together. The work is as exciting as it is important.



# Backdrop

# Backdrop

In our previous five-year plan, we focused on the student experience. We are in a position of strength as we prepare to expand our agenda and compound our impact.



## We have a mission

Our mission is to put psychology to work in the world, to maximize its reach and deep human impact. Psychology needs to show up in the right forms, in the right places, and at the right times. And we have a particular commitment to serving the under-served.

We deliver on this mission by understanding deeply the contexts in which our work is needed, training students accordingly, providing services and resources to individuals, providing tools to organizations and practitioners, and improving the environment for the practice of psychology.

At its core, our mission requires us to develop students' knowledge and skills, and turn out graduates who make a difference for individuals and society. Accordingly, the student experience was the focus of the five-year strategic plan that preceded *Innovation & Impact*.

We have built a great student experience, with outstanding faculty, highly interactive teaching, tremendous mentorship, and strong supervised clinical training. Our environment is collegial, supportive, personal, and fulfilling. We deliver an education that makes for great careers primed for improving lives. All this has been confirmed through our strategic planning process, as we consulted with the full range of stakeholders and reviewed data.

We have developed a signature commitment to contextualization of care. Differences among people—cultural contexts, personal situations, aspirations—are not new, but psychology has been slow to individualize care accordingly. We have become a leader in addressing this need, including through innovative specialty training in areas such as Latinx psychology, infant and early childhood mental health, and sport performance.

"The GSPP environment is collegial, supportive, personal, and fulfilling. We deliver an education that makes for great careers primed for improving lives."



### **We have a vision**

We will be a model for what a great graduate school of applied psychology should be. While that is not in itself our goal, it is the logical outcome of our six major strategic objectives.

We have innovated, too, with respect to techniques we teach and practice. We have a fundamental commitment to traditional techniques, and an overarching belief in the primacy of relationships. Complementary to that, we encourage development and practice of new methods in psychology.

Through our teaching clinics and students' off-campus clinical placements, we reach hundreds of people each year. We play an important part, alongside other organizations, in serving the Denver area's needs.

We embark on this new strategic plan from a position of strength—a healthy school with high application rates, strong student satisfaction, excellent placement and hiring, and innovative programs.

Our plan for the next seven years shifts us from a core focus on the student experience to a broader, integrated focus which more energetically reaches into the community while also enriching the education we provide. That plan, *Innovation & Impact: Psychology Applied to a Complex World*, is detailed in the following pages.

# Shaping Our Strategic Vision: The Planning Process

This document and the vision it outlines is the culmination of two processes, touching dozens of stakeholders, including faculty, staff, alumni, and external constituents in formal and informal co-creation and collaboration.

The first process was an ongoing one. It centered on the strategic plan developed in 2013. That plan was used as the framework for continuous review and input from stakeholders in the form of structured conversations over the course of five years. In addition, review and refinement took place each year in meetings of faculty and staff at GSPP.

The second process was concentrated. It was conducted between January and May of 2018. Strategic planning experts first aggregated the findings which emerged from the previous five years of inputs into a core discussion document. From there, the experts conducted a series of interviews and real-time co-creation conversations with stakeholders. Included were students and alumni, faculty and staff, and people from community mental health organizations as well as corporations.

The outcome of those conversations became a reference point for two live co-creation sessions—one with faculty and staff and the other with GSPP's Board of Advisors, which is comprised of nonprofit and corporate representatives, philanthropists, and private-practice psychologists, including alumni.

The result of that process is this strategic plan, *Innovation & Impact: Psychology Applied to a Complex World*. We are indebted to all those who have helped shape this plan. We believe we have emerged with a shared vision, and we are excited to have the support, passion, and energy of so many to press forward and change lives.



# Executive Summary

# The Six Strategic Objectives

The plan centers on six strategic objectives, which combine to produce market-leading psychology professionals, support psychology practitioners, and transform the environment for the practice of psychology.

## 1

### Deliver an exemplary student experience

We will keep the student experience at the leading edge by constantly refreshing it with insights from the job market, community needs, and our applied–research ecosystem. We have two priority student–focused objectives, which are to improve affordability and to attract more students from under–represented populations.

## 2

### Be a model workplace

It is fitting that a school of psychology be a model workplace, one that provides work/life balance, an environment of support, and enables everyone to innovate and perform to full potential. Our team is professionally and emotionally committed to what we do. We must ensure that their growth and well–being is a co–equal part of our agenda.

## 3

### Create an applied–research ecosystem

GSPP will be the hub of a dynamic applied–research ecosystem, centered on capturing, cataloging, and analyzing insights, defining the most innovative and effective methods, and then taking those findings into student development and to the world in the form of practical tools for organizations and individual practitioners.

## 4

### Be a leading service provider and force multiplier

While we are already a meaningful provider of psychology services through our clinics, we will expand our reach. We will serve our immediate and extended community by delivering services via satellite clinics and telehealth, focused on under–served populations. We will improve the reach and quality of service provided by a broad range of organizations and practitioners by developing and deploying resources for their use.

## 5

### Transform the environment for psychology

Through public engagement and initiatives to shape public policy, we will embark on a drive to end stigma and improve access to psychology services. We will make Denver a model mental health environment, and influence the field nationally and globally. This work has already kicked off under the banner of "Redefining Mental Health."

## 6

### Be a visionary partner in "One DU"

Among the schools and colleges of the University, there is great expertise on a wide range of social determinants of people's health. Integrating these will create a critically important distinction (and fundraising opportunity) for DU in the field of psychology. We will partner with alumni and the broader community on this integration.



# The GSPP Plan of Action in Summary

Cutting across all of the six strategic objectives are an impact agenda and an innovation agenda.

Those agendas are broken out below.

## Highlights of Our Impact Agenda

- **Access to a GSPP education:** Address the barrier of cost and attract more students from under-represented populations.
- **Specialization and contextualization:** Build out the innovative specializations we created as part of our previous strategic plan.
- **Resources for practitioners:** Develop online resources and embed faculty inside organizations, with a particular focus on under-served.
- **Services for individuals:** Deploy online resources and clinics close to under-served populations.
- **Public education and public policy:** Craft and execute an agenda to transform the environment for the practice of psychology.

## Highlights of Our Innovation Agenda

- **Community-driven research and assistance priorities:** Co-create an agenda with community partners.
- **An applied-research ecosystem:** Generate a continuous cycle of cutting-edge insights from the community to share back with partners and to use in student development.
- **Market-leading curriculum and training:** Connect with employers to co-create aspects of our teaching and training.
- **Integration of social determinants of mental health:** Cross-functionally create actionable insights with partners throughout DU.
- **Use of technology:** Develop capacity for telehealth, e-learning, and means of analyzing sessions.

# Infrastructure

Our ability to deliver on the promise of this plan would be accelerated and deepened if we were to expand and improve our facilities and technology. All of our stakeholders—on our campus as well as in our local, regional, and global community—would benefit.

We envision state of the art facilities for our clients, our students, and our research enterprise.

For clients, space and facilities upgrades are needed as we improve and expand our clinics. Existing inadequacies prevent us from serving some populations, and make it difficult to serve others—such as those with physical disabilities. In addition, we currently lack places to accommodate drop-in and community engagement activities.

Our service to community and our ability to be a force multiplier by providing resources for practitioners outside our School requires technology and the space to house technology-based initiatives. For example, telehealth and e-learning requires space for studios.

For our applied-research ecosystem, we would get further faster if we had an environment built for this purpose. That means appropriate technology and staff offices devoted to the capture and cataloging of sessions, rooms set up for observation, plus offices in which faculty can conduct their private practices, which would give us additional inputs for our research.

And for our students, we currently have no place in which the full student body can assemble, and very limited space for formal and informal meetings, collaboration, and creative collisions.

While the infrastructure needs will not delay implementation of our strategic plan, clearly some elements of the plan can only be fully realized with the addition of new facilities and upgraded technology.



# The Strategic Plan in Detail

# Deliver an Exemplary Student Experience

GSPP develops leaders in the field of psychology, trained with a balance of classic and innovative approaches and attuned to the contextualization of care. In this way, teaching and training is highly textured, and rigorously real-world. The overall environment is supportive and personalized, with high levels of student-faculty interaction in and out of the classroom. But going forward, GSPP will be more diverse: We will be more accessible to talented students regardless of their financial position, and we will increase the ranks of under-represented populations in our programs.

Many students graduate with crushing debt, and many excellent prospective students turn away from us because of the cost. Addressing this problem has to be a top priority for GSPP, just as reducing financial burden is a major goal of the University's *IMPACT 2025* strategic plan.

In addition to this, we look to preserve and press the advantages we have created. These advantages fall primarily into four areas—the quality, texture, and richness of a GSPP education; the supportive and collegial environment; GSPP's signature specialized-training tracks; and general sensitivity to the contextualization of care.

We also have much work to do to attract more students from under-represented populations. These are great stores of talent we otherwise miss. In addition, as the demographics of our country change, it is all the more important that the demographics of our profession keep up.



# Strategic Initiatives



## Address financial obstacles

The cost of a GSPP education discourages many top applicants, who are attracted to schools that offer scholarships, and leaves many who attend our School in deep debt. We must reduce the financial burden on students.

- 1A.1 Increase scholarship support, reaching at least 75% of students
- 1A.2 Provide financial support for field placements to enable students to take assignments regardless of whether stipends are offered
- 1A.3 Provide financial literacy education to enable students to manage debt



## Support and increase student–faculty relationships

The collegial, supportive atmosphere is a fundamentally important characteristic of a GSPP education, and needs to be protected and built.

- 1B.1 Ensure teaching loads are kept to levels that enable faculty more time for work with students outside of the classroom
- 1B.2 Keep class sizes to an appropriate faculty–to–student ratio



## Elevate inclusive excellence

While past recruitment efforts have succeeded up to a point, we should not be satisfied with the degree of diversity in our program.

- 1C.1 Expand our inclusive excellence agenda, defining our terms and objectives
- 1C.2 Create a proactive plan for recruiting students from under–represented populations
- 1C.3 Use e–learning methods to bring remote, diverse voices into our classrooms

# Be a Model Employer

GSPP will be a model employer, producing outstanding experiences for faculty and staff, who in turn produce excellent outcomes. A model workplace is collegial. It is characterized by inclusive excellence along with strong and supportive relationships. It promotes healthy work/life balance, and is clear, consistent, and transparent in expectations. A model workplace is also resilient, with a sustainable structure that fosters collaboration and encourages innovation.

It is fitting that a school of applied psychology be a model employer with a healthy workplace. It is also fitting that this priority be co-equal to everything else we do. This is very much in line with *DU IMPACT 2025's* vision to be an exemplary employer, and to build a community of diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence. Our objective is also wellness and balance, with a continued expectation of innovation and high performance.

Focusing on this is important at any time, but particularly so now. We have built a strong workplace and sense of community, but the pace of innovation and growth in our School has been tremendous over the past five years. In some ways our culture and staffing are still catching up. Meanwhile, we are in this plan envisioning still more innovation and new commitments for faculty and staff.

In preparing our strategic plan, we gave considerable thought to what it will take to be a model employer. We believe we have many elements in place. Above all, there is a broad belief, borne out in the interviews conducted as part of the strategic planning process, that GSPP is already a highly collegial and supportive place to work. But there is also broad belief that there is more work to do.

# 2

# Strategic Initiatives



## Create resilient staffing structures and processes

As we add to our agenda, shift expectations, and build our team, we need to update our structures and systems for faculty and staff.

- 2A.1 Create a mechanism for staffing and resource allocation decisions
- 2A.2 Update and refine role expectations as well as evaluation and promotion criteria
- 2A.3 For inclusive excellence, develop recruiting and workplace training plans
- 2A.4 Continuously improve workplace engagement
- 2A.5 Actively invite courageous conversations
- 2A.6 Increase staff when making net increases in School commitments



## Develop a systematic professional development program

To enable faculty and staff to meet expectations and fulfill growth aspirations, we need a more formal professional development program, including training in how to lead change and innovation.

- 2B.1 Develop a comprehensive policy
- 2B.2 Ensure each member of our team has the opportunity to create a personal development agenda
- 2B.3 Offer training on how to lead change and innovation



## Define a "healthy workplace"

We began our work to define what we mean by "healthy workplace" during the strategic planning process, but more needs to be done to ensure we are all pursuing the same goal.

- 2C.1 Create a faculty and staff working group to define priorities
- 2C.2 Develop guidance and training to support desired outcomes

# Create an Applied–Research Ecosystem

GSPP will create a dynamic applied–research ecosystem. We will capture practical insights and data from faculty private practices, our clinics, and from partners throughout Colorado and around the world. We will identify the most innovative and effective practices. The insights we capture will be developed into practical tools which we will provide to students and to outside organizations and individuals, contributing to a continuous improvement in the practice of psychology. In the process, we will include a significant focus on the contextualization of care, a GSPP signature.

Our envisioned ecosystem addresses several elements of the University’s strategic plan at once—supporting research, creating opportunities for external funding and industry partnerships, building knowledge bridges, and collaborating for the public good. We will generate new knowledge and immediately apply it in the community.

GSPP already conducts research in various forms. This new initiative will build on that work. Our applied–research ecosystem will make GSPP a vital, go–to resource for Denver, for Colorado, and beyond. At the same time, the insights we generate will keep GSPP’s education cutting–edge.

As part of this work, we will launch an initiative to create community–driven research and assistance agendas. This will involve, first, systematically capturing insights on needs from existing partners and, second, identifying new partners in both the nonprofit and corporate worlds.

Our applied research ecosystem will start close to home. Our faculty continually generate insights in their professional practices. Those, too, need to be captured, analyzed, and packaged for use much more comprehensively.

# 3



# Strategic Initiatives



## **Capture, analyze, and catalog insights from faculty, private practices, clinics, and partners**

- 3A.1 Make it an option for faculty to bring their private practices onto campus, with state of the art facilities that serve both counseling and research needs
- 3A.2 Acquire technology for recording, analyzing, and cataloging sessions
- 3A.3 Create a research unit to be staffed by GSPP students
- 3A.4 Develop an agenda to define and prioritize content and tools to be produced
- 3A.5 Define a process for capturing insights from external partners



## **Be a leader in developing community-driven agendas for research and outreach/assistance**

- 3B.1 Launch a community-partnership agenda-setting and co-creation initiative
- 3B.2 Develop a faculty-embed program to support corporate and community partners, and to feed data and insight back into our applied-research ecosystem

# Be a Service Provider & Force Multiplier

Through our clinics, we are an important provider of psychology services, playing our part alongside many others. While we expect limited organic growth in our campus-based clinics, we envision an expanded role in serving individuals through satellite facilities and telehealth. Our biggest point of impact, however, will be as a force multiplier: We can expand our reach and our value, and in some cases help shape the services others provide, by making ourselves a resource for community mental health organizations, hospitals, corporations, and individual practitioners. We must be on point and easily accessible.

We envision expanding our reach in two ways: First, there is tremendous opportunity to provide resources online, both for individuals and for practitioners. This will be a priority. Second, we see an opportunity to set up a limited number of satellite offices, specifically offices that will reach under-served populations and/or will link with our community-driven agenda. Both of these strategies also have far-reaching potential for international research and practice, and exemplify the *DU IMPACT 2025* emphasis on making DU an open door to engagement and vitality.

Our traditional on-campus clinics will, of course, continue. They provide vital services to the community, while also being an indispensable tool for student training. As we grow our specializations, we anticipate the need to grow the physical space we have to house our clinics. Even now, that space is falling short of needs.

# 4

## Strategic Initiatives



### **Develop and deploy means to be a force multiplier**

- 4A.1 Create an online resource-sharing system
- 4A.2 Launch a series of on-campus seminars
- 4A.3 Develop revenue-generating e-learning modules
- 4A.4 Build out our strategy for resource-sharing



### **Develop and deploy new ways to reach individuals, particularly those in under-served communities unable to come to our Denver clinics, and those with under-served needs**

- 4B.1 Develop a system of satellite clinics and mobile health
- 4B.2 Create online resources, including telehealth
- 4B.3 Add clinics to correspond with recently created specializations
- 4B.4 Develop a plan for growing existing clinics, pending the addition of new facilities

# Transform the Environment for the Practice of Psychology

GSPP has a major role to play in bringing about a transformation in the environment for the practice of psychology. We will create and execute public education campaigns focused on decreasing stigma, improving awareness, increasing the usage of psychology services, and building a climate of contextualized care. We also envision direct engagement with policy makers, sharing our expertise for use in the crafting of legislation and regulation. We seek to make the Denver area a model mental health environment and to do our part across the nation and around the world. This is in line with the call of *DU IMPACT 2025* to empower the community and address social needs.

# 5

We believe in the power of psychology to transform lives and to build a healthier, more productive society. We need to help ensure that power is fully realized. We must take a greater leadership role in transforming how psychology is perceived and practiced because it's only by doing so that we can reach the full range of people who can benefit from what we do.

We have capabilities, expertise, and standing that others do not. That gives us a great opportunity—and arguably a great responsibility—to take deliberate action. Our action starts with what and how we teach our students, and then extends into the Denver community, the nation, and the world.

## Strategic Initiatives



### Define our agenda

As we continue to develop and execute our “Redefining Mental Health” public engagement initiative, we will bring together faculty, staff, and others to define our terms and set our goals



### Develop an outreach/engagement strategy

There are a number of ways to redefine psychology in the public mind—events, media relations, marketing, etc.; we will develop a strategy that delivers the highest, most cost-effective impact



### Empower students

In our curriculum, we will ensure that students develop personal capabilities to transform the psychology environment



### Empower faculty and staff

Faculty have much to offer each other, as do staff—and we will encourage the sharing of knowledge and techniques



### Engage on public policy

We will create a deliberate public policy agenda and develop the capacity and expertise to focus, package, and manage this initiative

## Be a Visionary Partner in “One DU”

The concept of “One DU” outlined in the University’s *DU IMPACT 2025* envisions, at its core, a significant increase in collaboration across campus. We see in that vision the makings of a great distinction in the field of psychology: GSPP can increase the degree to which psychology is cross-disciplinary. People are multifaceted, and psychology works best when it understands each facet individually yet addresses them collectively. On our campus are units representing many social determinants of health—and we intend to lead the integration of those determinants.

We envision related opportunities to collaborate on grant-seeking and fundraising. We recognize that financial considerations can either be a powerful bond or a strong wedge within a university—and, accordingly, we must prioritize collaboration on fundraising.

“One DU” also means extending collaboration beyond our campus. Elsewhere in this document we’ve discussed close collaborations with, and service to, the community. Our commitment also encompasses alumni: We are on a drive to boost both engagement and service offerings for GSPP graduates.

# 6

We are committed to leveraging the energy and expertise of our diverse communities to bring this plan to life. As we continue our tradition of innovating for impact, we will create a model organization that applies psychology to address complex problems and improve the human condition. DU is being transformed through *DU IMPACT 2025*, and these strategies will help to build that transformation.

# Strategic Initiatives



## Develop a “social determinants of health” cross-campus initiative

Link with DU schools and colleges on cross-disciplinary applied research and teaching.

- 6A.1 Designate a GSPP person or group to lead this initiative
- 6A.2 Create a shared resource cataloging social determinants of health resources, classes, and expertise on campus



## Mobilize and connect Advancement and Grants teams across schools/colleges

Joint ventures to seek funding, as opposed to solo efforts, would be more powerful in many circumstances.

- 6B.1 Develop an agenda of cross-campus priorities, to be shared and refined with Advancement and Grants staff
- 6B.2 Work with Advancement to partner with local foundations



## Collaborate across units for student and alumni services

There are opportunities both with “like” units such as the Graduate School of Social Work and with others ranging from the athletics department to the Daniels College of Business.

- 6C.1 Identify bi-directional programming
- 6C.2 Define new areas for joining forces for student services
- 6C.3 Create opportunities for alumni networking

## Strategic Initiatives



### **Collaborate locally, nationally, and globally**

We have identified many opportunities to engage internal and external partners throughout this plan; there are two additional areas of focus.

- 6D.1 Leverage our Board of Advisors to make connections
- 6D.2 Develop an agenda for further partnership with DU's internationalization offices



### **Build alumni engagement and alumni value proposition**

We envision building additional alumni services, creating beneficial engagement opportunities for all.

- 6E.1 Create a suite of "GSPP for life" services and engagement opportunities
- 6E.2 Increase giving by alumni
- 6E.3 Raise awareness among alumni of tools available from GSPP



With *Innovation & Impact*, GSPP launches a powerful project. It is a project to continuously innovate psychology education and increase access to it, to create a research ecosystem which generates actionable insights for GSPP and practitioners everywhere, and to take on an expanded and critically important role in transforming the environment for the practice of psychology. With this plan, more lives will be touched with more effective methods in a more supportive environment.

Just as we are a force in our students' lives, producing exceptional professionals, we will be a force multiplier by aiding organizations and practitioners. And just as we will be at the heart of an ecosystem for collecting and cataloging learnings *from* others we will equally be sharing *with* others.

We are taking action. We ask you to join us in whatever capacity you can.

As appropriate, we will be both out in front, as is our responsibility, and side by side. We will lead as well as listen. Just as we have not prepared this agenda alone, we know we will not be able to fulfill its promise alone. Fortunately, we have an extraordinary network. We need you. We also need to build that network to ensure we are equal to our growing hopes, ambitions, and potential for impacting people's lives.

*Innovation & Impact* is our guide. Each of its elements now need accompanying plans of action, and then continuous evaluation and renewal. That will require ongoing co-creation and, sometimes, shared execution with campus, community, and partners from outside as well as inside.

Where GSPP is innovative and impactful, we will become even more so, including through a broadening cross-disciplinary set of partnerships within our University. We will educate students

# Onward

“Please join us...to make sure psychology shows up in the world when, where, and how it’s needed.”

accordingly, and we will share with others the means to become more innovative and impactful as well. As GSPP continues to develop students to practice an enlightened and highly contextual form of psychology, it means we are producing professionals who are especially adept at meeting the demands of a complex world, taking on a range of special circumstances, and effectively working with an increasingly diverse American population. We will deepen our capacity in these areas, and we will share insights and techniques with others.

*Innovation & Impact* is in line the University’s strategic plan, *DU IMPACT 2025*, which envisions a university united, producing outstanding student experiences which lead to fulfilling and purposeful careers, and an institution that’s a hub of community empowerment and vitality. We embrace that vision and will bring the expertise and resources of GSPP plus its partners, alumni, and friends to bear. Together, we will collectively make extraordinary impact.

We are humbled by the trust so many have put in us. Thank you. We hear the call for leadership. Please join us in the cause of improving mental health and leveraging psychology to enable people to fulfill their potential, get through difficult times, have more satisfying lives, and be part of a more productive and fulfilled society—to make sure psychology shows up in the world when, where, and how it’s needed.

