

# BOARD OF REGENTS

## BRIEFING PAPER

### 1. AGENDA ITEM TITLE: DRI 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, and Handbook revision to the Mission Statement

MEETING DATE: December 3 & 4, 2020

### 2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

In late 2019, DRI set out to update the Institute's strategic plan and critical objectives that were previously defined and last reviewed in 2015. Before embarking on this new strategic planning process, we were required to complete our five-year external review. The External Review was completed in early 2020. Recommendations from that Committee included:

- Establish a distinctive identity and articulate a clear vision and mission
- Develop a strategic plan to achieve that vision, identify achievable goals and actions, allocate resources needed, and task individuals to be responsible and accountable.
- Increase collaboration across NSHE
- Assess and implement succession planning and cross-division and department work

DRI launched a Strategic Planning Committee to review these recommendations and to develop a strategic plan to guide DRI over the next five years. The Strategic Planning Committee, led by President Kumud Acharya, Dr. Vicken Etyemezian, and Dr. Amanda Keen Zebert, solicited ideas from faculty, staff, DRI Foundation Trustees, and community members. Although the COVID-19 pandemic made it more challenging to gain input that would traditionally be provided in person, more than 140 DRI faculty and staff (greater than 30 percent of all DRI personnel) participated in 50 virtual meetings and individual interviews to develop the plan. The completed plan represents the culmination of the feedback received.

### 3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

President Kumud Acharya requests approval of DRI's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan and Handbook revision to the Mission Statement.

The new mission statement is that "We are a home for science to create a better future for the people of Nevada and the world." Through the strategic planning process, our research faculty, technologists, and administrative staff identified fundamental principles they deem essential to the DRI's continued sustainability and success. Those core principles are reflected in our **updated core values, vision, and mission statements**.

Our strategic priorities for the next five years are crafted to support our research, and they are grounded in our core values. As we progress on **Optimizing Performance, Elevating Awareness, and Cultivating Engagement**, we will maintain the flexibility and freedom that attracts top talent to DRI while preserving our unique culture of inquiry and enacting substantive change to increase diversity across our Institution. Our newly defined shared values reflect the commitments and the principles that our research faculty, technologists, and support staff have outlined.

DRI's research portfolio is the heart of the institution. The strategic plan identifies targeted research areas for future growth, focused on identifying and solving problems, building on existing expertise in the areas of climate change and wildland fire, examining the intersection of human and natural systems, fostering expertise in the area of environmental impacts to human health, and sharing our expertise through STEM education. Each division and department within DRI will establish metrics to help the Institute meet the goals outlined within the plan.

### 4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 3.2 of the Board of Regents Handbook states:

Institutional strategic plans and mission statements for each NSHE institution, including the Desert Research Institute, shall be presented for consideration to the Board of Regents at least every seven years and will cover a planning period of up to seven years. Updates concerning progress toward major goals and the revision of existing goals may come before the Board at any time during the seven year planning period as determined appropriate by the institution.

DRI is scheduled for its periodic presentation on our strategic plan.

**5. CHECK THE NSHE STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL THAT IS SUPPORTED BY THIS REQUEST:**

- ☐ Access (Increase participation in post-secondary education)
- ☐ Success (Increase student success)
- ☐ Close the Achievement Gap (Close the achievement gap among underserved student populations)
- ☒ Workforce (Collaboratively address the challenges of the workforce and industry education needs of Nevada)
- ☒ Research (Co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21<sup>st</sup> century Nevada and raise the overall research profile)
- ☐ Not Applicable to NSHE Strategic Plan Goals

**INDICATE HOW THE PROPOSAL SUPPORTS THE SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL**

DRI's strategic priorities outlined in this plan map to the NSHE Board of Regent's Strategic Goals across Nevada's System of Higher Education, particularly the goal of research to "co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21st century Nevada and raise the overall research profile.

**6. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

- The plan has been reviewed and approved by campus constituents.
- DRI is scheduled for a periodic presentation to the Board of Regents in accordance with Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 3.2 of the Board of Regents Handbook.

**7. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

None

**8. ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:**

None

**9. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE:**

**10. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:**

X Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # 4 Chapter # 14 Section # 3

X Amends Current Board Policy: Title # 4 Chapter # 14 Section # 4

☐ Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Fiscal Impact: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No x

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 4**  
**DRI Institutional Mission Statement**

Additions appear in ***boldface italics***; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

**Section 4.     Institutional Mission Statements**

The Board of Regents has adopted the institutional mission statements as follows:

....

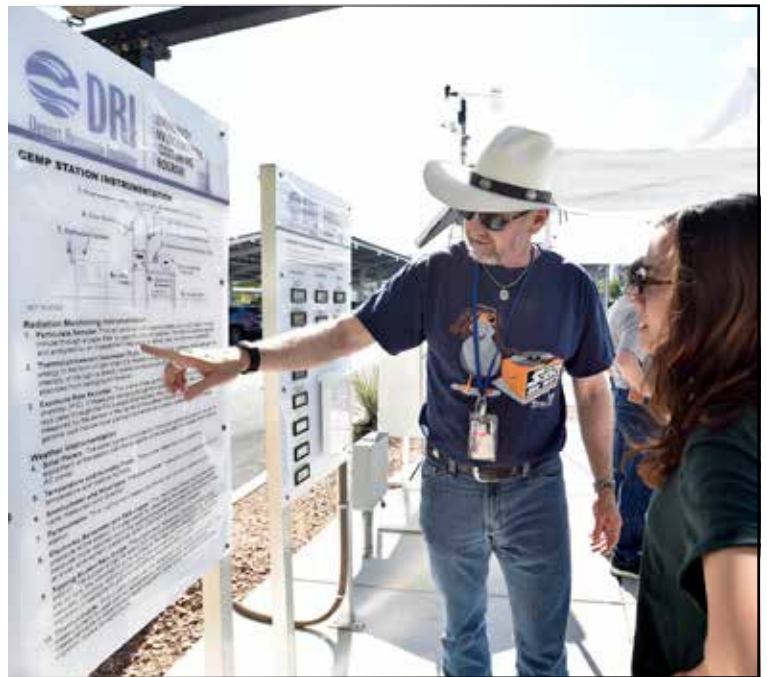
**3. DESERT RESEARCH INSTITUTE (DRI) MISSION STATEMENT**

***We are a home for science to create a better future for the people of Nevada and the world.  
We implement our mission through shared governance and by fostering diverse talent.***

[~~We excel in basic and applied research and the application of technologies to improve people's lives throughout Nevada and the world. We implement this mission by fostering scientific and engineering talent. We apply scientific understanding to the effective management of natural resources while meeting Nevada's needs for economic diversification and science-based educational opportunities.~~]



# Strategic Plan 2020-2025



RESEARCH DRIVING SOLUTIONS FOR A CHANGING PLANET

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [WWW.DRI.EDU/STRATEGICPLAN2025](http://WWW.DRI.EDU/STRATEGICPLAN2025)



***“It’s time to begin a national dialogue about science.”***

— RESEARCH FACULTY MEMBER





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Vision + Mission	3
Our Core Values	4
Our Research Portfolio	6
Our Strategic Priorities	7
- Optimize Performance (Goals + Metrics)	8
- Elevate Awareness (Goals + Metrics)	10
- Cultivate Engagement (Goals + Metrics)	12
Integration with NSHE Strategic Goals	14
Appendices	
- Rationale and Process	16
- Implementation Tactics Matrix	18

# INTRODUCTION

For more than 60 years, the Desert Research Institute has functioned as the nonprofit, non-degree-granting environmental research arm of the Nevada System of Higher Education. Focused on basic and applied research, the Institute's unique model blends academia with entrepreneurship to deliver a wide variety of scientific services and research-generated knowledge to its sponsors and clients.

DRI faculty are nontenured and responsible for generating their own salaries and Institute operating revenues through external funding. DRI also receives a portion of its annual operating revenues from the State of Nevada. As an autonomous organization in NSHE, DRI maintains financial and personnel policies and procedures that differ from other NSHE institutions.

Formed by a mandate of Nevada Legislature in 1959, DRI's directive remains -

*"...To contribute more effectively to the security of the nation and to promote the general welfare of the State of Nevada and its citizens through the development of educational and scientific research..."*

Today, DRI's research portfolio includes expertise spanning Earth, physical, and life sciences, and engineering. Our research portfolio is the focus of everything we do at DRI, and its greatest strengths are its diversity and flexibility. Unencumbered by the pursuit of tenure, DRI faculty have the freedom to pursue high-risk innovative science. Faculty come to DRI to pursue big ideas. They stay because of the freedom, flexibility, and independence that our organization provides.

Through the strategic planning process, our research faculty, technologists, and administrative staff identified fundamental principles they deem essential to the DRI's continued sustainability and success. Those core principles are reflected in our **updated core values, vision, and mission statements.**

Our strategic priorities for the next five years are crafted to support our research, and they are grounded in our core values. As we progress on **Optimizing Performance, Elevating Awareness, and Cultivating Engagement**, we will maintain the flexibility and freedom that attracts top talent to DRI while preserving our unique culture of inquiry and enacting substantive change to increase diversity across our Institution.



## VISION

We envision a world in which trust between scientists and the public forms the basis for a more sustainable and resilient environment for all people to live, grow, and prosper.



## MISSION

We are a home for science to create a better future for the people of Nevada and the world.

We implement our mission through shared governance and by fostering diverse talent.





---

# OUR CORE VALUES

At DRI, **Impactful Science, Community, and Diversity** are the core values that we uphold and seek to serve above all else.

Conducting **impactful science** means doing science that has an impact in our diverse communities and realizing those impacts through education and engagement. Science plays a critical role in defining, understanding, and solving humanity's most pressing needs for a sustainable future, the well-being of the communities in which we live and work, and the continued economic prosperity of our nation.

Fulfilling our mandate requires us to engage our **community**, the people where we work and live. We understand that both **impactful science and serving our communities requires diversity** of demographics, thought, and experience. We commit to increasing and supporting diversity at our Institution and throughout our scientific and local communities. We will hold ourselves and our organization accountable to take meaningful action toward a more diverse and equitable global scientific community.





We thrive in a workplace that allows us to be actively engaged in our families, professions, and communities.

Within our organization, we practice shared governance to empower all members of the **DRI community** to help achieve our mission and vision. In our **commitment to impactful science**, we have central roles in predicting, understanding, and addressing the issues faced by humanity.

We conduct our work in a principled way, and we represent our work accurately and without political bias. By **engaging our diverse stakeholders across the Nevada and NSHE communities**, we foster the potential of NSHE's Strategic Research Goal to 'co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21st central Nevada' through high-profile, impactful scientific research.

We will cultivate and grow a community conversation about our work to demonstrate the value of science and to aid informed decisions and investments to best respond to our changing climate.

Public trust and confidence in science is imperative for a sustainable future.

## IMPACTFUL SCIENCE COMMUNITY DIVERSITY



---

# OUR RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Our research portfolio is at the heart of everything we do at DRI. We have developed strategies that ensure our flexibility, agility, and responsiveness to a rapidly changing funding environment. We will pursue innovative, high-risk/high-reward research and lead and respond to shifts in science and engineering frontiers.

Defined and led by our scientists, our research portfolio will address the scientific problems and questions we and our sponsors deem to be most impactful, relevant, and inspiring. Motivated by the spark of discovery, the quest for deeper understanding, and service to humanity, our organization will support the freedom to pursue the research that compels us.

## Areas of Research for Targeted Growth

Over the next five years, we will maintain our robust, diverse research portfolio and reinforce our foundational strengths in Earth, physical, and life sciences; applying science and engineering to the nation's security; and promoting the general welfare of the State of Nevada and its citizens.

- Fulfilling the promise of impactful science requires not only identifying problems, but also solving them. We will seek and develop new opportunities for growth in providing solutions to the problems posed by climate and environmental change.
- We will build on our existing expertise and continue working to better understand and mitigate the impact of climate change and hazards, such as wildland fire, particularly in our region.
- We see an opportunity for growth at the intersection of coupled human and natural systems, notably by expanding in social science.
- We will foster our emergent expertise in the environmental impacts on human health by developing interdisciplinary collaborations across DRI and bolstering external partnerships.
- We will continue to serve as leaders in STEM education, fostering innovation, and supporting science literacy.

---

# OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our strategic priorities for the next five years are designed to support and optimize our research and have a foundation in our core values.

This plan describes how we will use our strategic priorities to **Optimize Performance, Elevate Awareness, and Cultivate Engagement** to progress our research. Following each priority description, we include goals for the five-year strategic plan period from 2021-2026 and corresponding metrics. Additional example implementation strategies appear in the Appendices.

We consider this plan to be a living document that can be modified to respond to changing conditions. Internally, we will set baselines for each metric and adopt and follow widely accepted best practices to successfully implement our strategies and tactics. We will align DRI's activities, the distribution of internal resources, performance evaluation, meeting agendas, and our quarterly DRI-wide assemblies to reinforce our core values and track implementation milestones and progress toward achieving our priorities and goals. We will maintain the flexibility and freedom that attracts top talent to DRI while preserving our culture of inquiry and enacting substantive change to increase diversity across our Institution.

---



***“I got into science to make a difference in the world.  
I think that is ultimately why we are all here.”***

— RESEARCH FACULTY MEMBER





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

# OPTIMIZE PERFORMANCE

Our scientific performance comes from success in securing funding from federal, state, corporate, and private sources and from executing the highest quality research with rigor, accuracy, and integrity. The maintenance and growth of the capabilities and capacities held in the research infrastructure of our laboratory, computing, and field-based assets is critical to research performance. Serving our core value in impactful science requires resources gained through grants, contracts, and philanthropic gifts to conduct the work of science.

We work and innovate most effectively when we work together in a supportive, collaborative environment focused on everyone's success. Empowering the potential of individuals and our networks across the Institute, NSHE institutions, and research institutions world-wide will strengthen our internal community and allow all faculty and research support staff to collaboratively conduct the business and work of our science.

A nimble and agile organization is necessary to survive and thrive in a turbulent, uncertain, novel, and ambiguous research funding environment. Organizational performance and aligning our operations to support our core values, mission, and vision are critical to achieving sustainability and change.

***“I love the boutique style of DRI. I can get a problem solved with a quick conversation, I have the opportunity to be involved in so many projects, and the quality of research is top notch.”***

— GRADUATE STUDENT, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

# GOALS & METRICS

- 1 We will build on our proposal success and maintain our critical research infrastructure.  
**Metric (a):** Increase by 10-15% the number of successful proposals.
- 2 We will engage in collaboration across the DRI community.  
**Metric (a):** Increase by 10-15% the number of cross-divisional proposals submitted; and number of cross-functional teams at DRI.
- 3 We will streamline our governance, business practices, and infrastructure to increase performance. Business continuity is critical to our sustainability in the future.  
**Metric (a):** Complete and implement a DRI Guide to Business Processes.  
**Metric (b):** Shift 15% of Division Director time from distributing resources to developing and leading research initiatives.
- 4 We will adopt best practices for succession planning, cross-training, and mentorship in all our roles.  
**Metric (a):** In the year one, develop a metric to track succession planning progress.  
**Metric (b):** Increase by 15% the number of internal mentor-mentee relationships and number of professional development trainings completed.
- 5 To support diversity in our community, we will align our revenue reinvestments to support all our values and highlight the urgent need to support diversity.  
**Metric (a):** Increase internal funding to programs that support diversity by 20%.
- 6 To support an inclusive work culture at DRI, we will create and disseminate a campus climate survey to track inclusion and belonging among employees.  
**Metric (a):** Complete a Campus Climate Survey on DRI work culture, focused on inclusion and belonging.  
**Metric (b):** Using the climate survey results, work with the IDEA Committee and HR to identify areas and target levels of improvement.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

# ELEVATE AWARENESS

Awareness about the scientific expertise we hold is essential to sustaining DRI's reputation built through a legacy of high-quality, impactful science. Being recognized as leaders in our scientific disciplines establishes the trust and credibility needed to instill confidence in our sponsors and clients. In an increasingly competitive funding environment, the role of reputation in driving success has growing significance.

Our internal community strengthens by improving awareness of our colleagues' roles, responsibilities, contributions, and workloads in all positions at our organization. Improved internal awareness will also help identify collaborative and interdisciplinary opportunities across DRI. Increasing our visibility in our scientific and professional communities will establish DRI and our faculty as reliable partners in defining the scientific agenda and in conducting the work of science. We must not only answer the call to do great science; we must issue the call. By elevating awareness of science and its role, impact, and value to society, DRI can serve as the voice of science in the communities in which we live and work, reinforcing understanding the importance of public investments in science.

Science that serves society's broadest needs requires a scientific workforce that draws upon the most comprehensive range of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. Understanding the spectrum of our diversity challenges and diversifying our demographics and thoughts will make us better scientists, role models, and community members in our professional and local communities. Elevating awareness about the need for diversity in science and the needs of a diverse scientific workforce is necessary for an enriched and sustained future at DRI. By showcasing our diversity, we can show the next generation of scientists that anyone can have a sustainable STEM career.

# GOALS & METRICS

- 7 We will build upon and grow the visibility and recognition of our research faculty's expertise, programs, and DRI.  
***Metric (a):** Increase by 15% recognition based on earned media and social media engagement.*  
***Metric (b):** Increase by 15% the number of new partnerships and collaborations; and the number of industry specific professional licenses and certifications.*
- 8 We will increase internal awareness of the capabilities of our workforce to foster cross-functional and cross-institutional collaboration.  
***Metric (a):** Complete a searchable internal directory of faculty and staff expertise and capabilities.*  
***Metric (b):** Increase by 10-15% the number of cross-divisional proposals submitted; and number of cross-functional teams at DRI.*
- 9 We will expand our external network in both scope and diversity through new research, academic, outreach, and partnerships.  
***Metric (a):** Increase by 15% the participation in skills forums and trainings offered.*  
***Metric (b):** Increase by 25% the amount of funding generated by Advancement.*  
***Metric (c):** Increase the number of NSHE cross-institutional proposals.*
- 10 Challenges to diversity pose problems to recruitment, retention, and in doing the highest quality science. We will increase awareness of challenges to diversity at DRI for all employees.  
***Metric (a):** Encourage voluntary participation in inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) trainings so that a minimum of 50% of faculty and staff receive annual IDEA training.*

***“It is time for us to get serious about inequity, gender, race, and our workplace environment. Diversity needs to be the norm, not an accessory to our organization.”***

**— TECHNOLOGIST, ADMINISTRATION**





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

# CULTIVATE ENGAGEMENT

Engagement, the purposeful mutual learning between scientists and stakeholders, is key to the future of scientific research. The impact of science undertaken at DRI can expand by cultivating engagement with science, which can broaden the understanding of the value of science to society. Engagement can improve research quality by establishing accountability to our sponsors, our broad spectrum of stakeholders, and our community.

DRI has a role to play in the integration of science and society, particularly in the state of Nevada and the local communities in which we live. Cultivating engagement across our various communities will integrate DRI science across those communities. Engagement along the STEM workforce pipeline will support retention in the sciences and increase productivity. Within NSHE, our professional and academic organizations, and our local communities, DRI can cultivate and renew public-private partnerships to serve our range of stakeholders better. Establishing equitable and inclusive research environments will provide a landscape in which engagement and innovation can flourish. Engaging a broader and more diverse audience will serve our value to develop and conduct impactful science that benefits humanity.

***“It’s so exciting to be on the forefront of science. I want to help change the world!”***  
— GRADUATE STUDENT, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

# GOALS & METRICS

- 11** We will build on DRI's recognition in our professional, academic, and local communities and engage broader stakeholder participation in science.  
***Metric (a):** Increase by 15% recognition through social media and website referrals to DRI.edu.*  
***Metric (b):** Increase by 10% recognition through Research Works for Nevada campaign with other NSHE institutions.*  
***Metric (c):** Increase by 20% the number of presentations, seminars, and guest lectures at fellow NSHE institutions, community forums and events, and at formal and informal education institutions.*
- 12** We will seek input from a diverse and comprehensive range of stakeholders when considering new projects, proposals, and research directions and activities, to ensure that outcomes benefit the greatest good.  
***Metric (b):** Increase by 20% public participation in our citizen science projects.*
- 13** We will actively seek opportunities to enhance and share the value of research and the student research experience across the entire Nevada System of Higher Education.  
***Metric (a):** Metric: Increase by 20% the number of post-docs and PhD students jointly advised by DRI and NSHE partners.*  
***Metric (b):** Increase by 10% the number of DRI internships held by NSHE undergraduates.*  
***Metric (c):** Increase by 10% the number of graduate students advised by DRI faculty.*  
***Metric (d):** In collaboration with UNR and UNLV, develop and lead an annual NSHE science and science communication forum.*
- 14** We will strengthen science communication training across the Institute and actively pursue opportunities for our faculty and students to share their work with the public.  
***Metric (a):** Increase by 25% the participation of faculty in science communication trainings offered.*

# INTEGRATION WITH NSHE GOALS

DRI's strategic priorities outlined in this plan map to the NSHE Board of Regent's Strategic Goals across Nevada's System of Higher Education, particularly the goal of research to "co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21st century Nevada and raise the overall research profile."

Research is both an essential part of higher education and relies on the higher education pipeline for the development of talent and resource allocation. For more than 60 years, research at DRI has helped the citizens and the State of Nevada leaders make informed decisions about the effective management of the state's natural resources while meeting Nevada's economic diversification needs and science-based educational opportunities.

Moving forward, past 2020, research at DRI will purposely disseminate knowledge and develop solutions to help society solve its most pressing environmental challenges and serve all NSHE by advancing a new paradigm of scientific engagement with the public. DRI's commitment to Elevate Awareness and Cultivate Engagement **will bolster the entire system** by highlighting the value that science has in local, regional, and national decision and policy-making and in addressing the needs presented by a changing climate and environment.



Research supports the entire system.

Co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21st century Nevada and raise the overall research profile





## NSHE GOAL 5 RESEARCH METRICS

- R&D expenditures - (compared to doctoral universities: highest research activity).
- Doctoral awards conferred per undergraduate and graduate AAFTE - (compared to doctoral universities: highest research activity).
- Doctorate holding non-faculty researchers in S&E and health - (compared to doctoral universities: highest research activity).
- Qualitative: description of research projects providing solutions to critical issues.

## CORRESPONDING DRI PLAN METRICS

- Proposal success, Research partnerships and collaborations.
- Jointly advised post-docs and PhDs, NSHE collaborations, Graduate research assistants working with DRI faculty.
- Succession planning, Professional development, Shared governance, Diversity, Campus culture.
- Stakeholder engagement, Visibility, recognition and awareness.



---

## APPENDICES

# RATIONALE AND PROCESS

In late 2019, DRI set out to update the Institute's strategic plan and critical objectives previously defined and last reviewed in 2015. Before embarking on this new strategic planning process, we required to complete our five-year external review.

In March of 2020, before the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute completed our external review presented the results to the Board of Regents. Parallel to the 2020 DRI External Review, and under President Acharya's direction, we formed a Strategic Planning Team, including members of DRI's Senior Leadership Team, Faculty Senate, Technologist Advisory Council, and Research Administration.

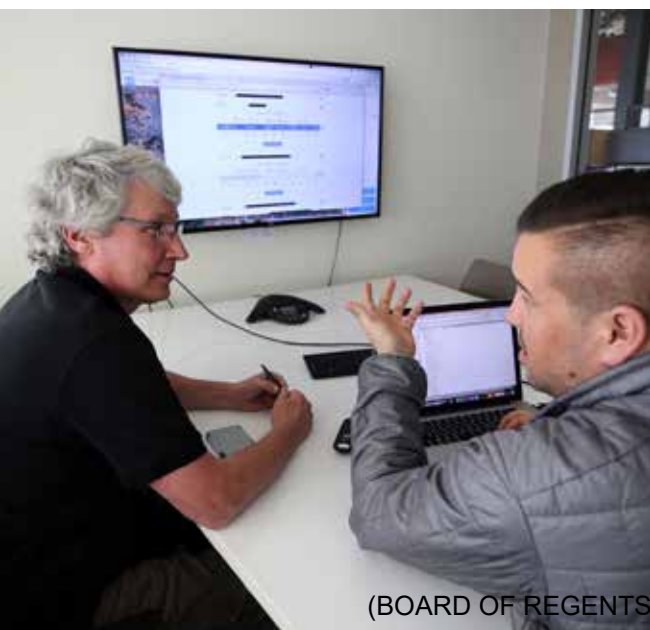
Following the External Review, our Strategic Planning Team planned to move forward with campus forums and discussions on DRI's future. However, all these events and conversations were postponed due to the COVID-19 campus closures and statewide stay-at-home orders. In an attempt to be fully inclusive of all voices at DRI, we then waited until our campus reopening plan was approved in June, and our employees were stable at home before rescheduling these forums.

In July and August of 2020, we moved forward to host a series of 17 small-group conversations utilizing the virtual platforms that our employees were comfortable using through their new regular remote working schedules. These sessions were open and made available to every employee of the Institute, including our student and hourly workers, administrative faculty; technologists; emeritus and temporary employees; and research faculty. During these sessions, the feedback we collected formed the foundation of our new shared values and strategic priorities outlined in this plan.

Following our initial information-gathering sessions, our Strategic Planning team held another round of nine meetings based on topics identified as being of interest to DRI's faculty and staff. Specific areas of focus included laboratory research, field-based research, commercialization and innovation, diversity within science, and educational initiatives. Adding to our attempt to make this process as inclusive as possible, and ensure that every voice at DRI was heard, our Strategic Planning team held an additional 33 individual conversations across virtual platforms with DRI's external stakeholders, Senior Leadership Team, DRI Foundation, and former Chancellor Thom Reilly, as well as long-time research partners in industry and the private sector.

Finally, DRI's new Strategic Plan was shared across the Institute for broad input. That feedback is reflected in this final version. Our newly defined shared values reflect the commitments and the principles that our research faculty, technologists, and support staff have outlined as essential to the Institute's continued success throughout this strategic planning process.







GOAL	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	METRIC
<b>(1)</b> - We will build on our proposal success and maintain our critical research infrastructure.	We will develop tools to enable, foster, and track proposal success. We will establish a baselines of proposal success rates at both individual and organizational scales. Follow-up and tracking mechanisms on pre-proposal activities, submitted proposals, and the revision and resubmission of proposals will enable us to better demonstrate and evaluate our return on investment in proposal development.	<b>(a)</b> - Increase by 10-15% the number of successful proposals.
<b>(2)</b> - We will engage in collaboration across the DRI community.	Identifying, coordinating, and supporting cross-divisional, cross-functional teams focused on innovative and interdisciplinary areas of research will both grow and expand on current expertise.	<b>(a)</b> - Increase by 10-15% the number of cross-divisional proposals submitted and number of cross-functional teams at DRI.
<b>(3)</b> - We will streamline our governance, business practices, and organizational structure to increase performance. Business continuity is critical to our sustainability in the future.	<p>Documenting business processes and functions in a written guide will support business continuity, cross-training capability, and transparency. The guide will define processes and decision rules.</p> <p>Identify business practices that can be made consistent across the institute and among divisions. Define how business processes (including mechanisms for ICR reinvestment) vary among divisions and why. Determine what processes and policies could be made consistent among all divisions to increase efficiency, cost savings, and business continuity and decrease functional silos.</p>	<p><b>(a)</b> - Complete and implement DRI Guide to Business Processes.</p> <p><b>(b)</b> - Shift 15% of Division Director time from distributing resources to developing and leading research initiatives.</p>
<b>(4)</b> - We will adopt best practices for succession planning, cross-training, and mentorship in all our roles.	<p>Succession planning will be integrated into promotion and retirement processes. For example, supervisors will evaluate personnel needs when a vacancy at a particular level is created either by promotion or retirement.</p> <p>Professional career development, succession planning, and mentorship will be incentivized in all roles and self-initiated job and performance improvement will be rewarded.</p>	<p><b>(a)</b> - In the year one, develop a metric to track succession planning progress.</p> <p><b>(b)</b> - Increase by 15% the number of internal mentor-mentee relationships and number of professional development trainings completed.</p>
<b>(5)</b> - To support diversity in our community, we will align our revenue reinvestments to support all our values and highlight the urgent need to support diversity.	Include our IDEA principles in the evaluation of competitive internal funding requests and applications.	<b>(a)</b> - Increase internal funding to programs that support diversity by 20%.
<b>(6)</b> - To support an inclusive work culture at DRI, we will create and disseminate a campus climate survey to track inclusion and belonging among employees.	<p>To evaluate the sense of employee engagement, a climate survey will be conducted early in the strategic plan period.</p> <p>Following the campus climate survey, we will use the results to inform targeted areas for increasing employee engagement.</p>	<p><b>(a)</b> - Complete a campus climate survey on DRI work culture, focused on inclusion and belonging.</p> <p><b>(b)</b> - Using the climate survey results, work with the IDEA Committee and HR to identify areas and target levels of improvement.</p>

GOAL	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	METRIC
<p><b>(7) -</b> We will build upon and grow the visibility and recognition of our research faculty's expertise, programs, and DRI.</p>	<p>Define a differentiated identity and brand that sets DRI apart and increases the recognition of DRI's unique value to our sponsors, clients, and communities.</p> <p>Encourage and support acquisition of professional certifications and licenses of our faculty in our disciplines to elevate recognition in our professional communities and increase credibility to our sponsors and clients.</p>	<p><b>(a)</b> - Increase by 15% recognition based on earned media and social media engagement.</p> <p><b>(b)</b> - Increase by 15% the number of new partnerships and collaborations; and the number of industry specific professional licenses and certifications.</p>
<p><b>(8) -</b> We will increase internal awareness of the capabilities of our workforce to foster cross-functional and cross-institutional collaboration."</p>	<p>We will develop an internal clearinghouse of talent and expertise of DRI faculty and staff, including searchable faculty and staff profiles that showcase unique skills and capabilities.</p> <p>Define and create new ways to foster internal collaboration on emerging scientific priorities.</p>	<p><b>(a)</b> - Complete a searchable internal directory of faculty and staff expertise and capabilities.</p> <p><b>(b)</b> - Increase by 10-15% the number of cross-divisional proposals submitted; and number of cross-functional teams at DRI.</p>
<p><b>(9) -</b> We will expand our external network in both scope and diversity through new research, academic, outreach, and partnerships."</p>	<p>Improve the ability of our faculty to engage broader non-specialist audiences and elevate the understanding of science in our professional and local communities.</p> <p>Develop our DRI Foundation members to become community ambassadors to promote DRI in our local communities.</p> <p>Lead NSHE institutions in a forum on scientific expertise across the system to identify cross-system potential for collaboration.</p>	<p><b>(a)</b> - Increase by 15% the participation in skills forums and trainings offered.</p> <p><b>(b)</b> - Increase by 25% the amount of funding generated by Advancement.</p> <p><b>(c)</b> - Increase the number of NSHE cross-institutional proposals.</p>
<p><b>(10) -</b> Challenges to diversity pose problems to recruitment, retention, and in doing the highest quality science. We will increase awareness of challenges to diversity at DRI for all employees.</p>	<p>We will focus on creating a more inclusive culture by following DRI's annual Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) recommendations to increase the diversity of qualified applicant pools by expanding recruitment efforts, implementing voluntary inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility training, and providing additional resources and training to improve hiring and retention of underrepresented groups. DRI will review and evaluate the AAP yearly to ensure DRI is approaching or meeting recommended placement goals within each job category.</p>	<p><b>(a)</b> - Encourage voluntary participation in inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) trainings so that a minimum of 50% of faculty and staff receive annual IDEA training.</p>



GOAL	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	METRIC
<b>(11)</b> - We will build on DRI's recognition in our professional, academic, and local communities and engage broader stakeholder participation in science.	<p>Support the creation and distribution of written and multi-media content that generates awareness and engagement that inspires action to support science and sustain research at DRI.</p> <p>Promotion of joint research collaborations and stories that highlight DRI faculty working with their colleagues across NSHE.</p> <p>Actively pursue opportunities for DRI faculty to present and share their work at events, conferences, forums, and talks hosted by our fellow NSHE institutions.</p>	<p><b>(a)</b> - Increase by 15% recognition through social media and website referrals to DRI.edu.</p> <p><b>(c)</b> - Increase by 10% recognition through Research Works for Nevada campaign with other NSHE institutions.</p> <p><b>(c)</b> - In year one, we will develop metrics to track progress in these areas.</p>
<b>(12)</b> - We will seek input from a diverse and comprehensive range of stakeholders when considering new projects, proposals, and research directions and activities, to ensure that outcomes benefit the greatest good.	Develop and employ methods and best practices for involving diverse stakeholders in all stages of science.	<b>(a)</b> - Increase by 20% public participation in our citizen science projects.
<b>(13)</b> - We will actively seek opportunities to enhance and share the value of research and the student research experience across the entire Nevada System of Higher Education.	<p>Develop nationally recognized Post Doc and Graduate Programs jointly advised by UNR, UNLV, and DRI faculty.</p> <p>In collaboration with NSHE institutions, develop a program for undergraduate students to intern at DRI.</p> <p>Support DRI's academic pursuits through advising graduate students and engaging them in research.</p> <p>Host and organize a NSHE-wide virtual forum on research.</p>	<p><b>(a)</b> - Increase by 20% the number of post-docs and PhD students jointly advised by DRI and NSHE partners.</p> <p><b>(b)</b> - Increase by 10% the number of DRI internships held by NSHE undergraduates.</p> <p><b>(c)</b> - Increase by 10% the number of graduate students advised by DRI faculty.</p> <p><b>(d)</b> - In collaboration with UNR and UNLV, develop and lead an annual NSHE science and science communication forum.</p>
<b>(14)</b> - We will strengthen science communication training across the Institute and actively pursue opportunities for our faculty and students to share their work with the public.	Develop and implement a series of internal science communication trainings.	<b>(a)</b> - Increase by 25% the participation of faculty in science communication trainings offered.



## **Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents**

Dr. Mark W. Doubrava, Chair  
Mrs. Carol Del Carlo, Vice Chair  
Dr. Patrick R. Carter  
Ms. Amy J. Carvalho  
Dr. Jason Geddes  
Mr. Trevor Hayes  
Ms. Lisa C. Levine  
Mrs. Cathy McAdoo  
Mr. Donald Sylvantee McMichael Sr.  
Mr. John T. Moran  
Mr. Kevin J. Page  
Ms. Laura E. Perkins  
Mr. Rick Trachok

Dr. Melody Rose, Chancellor

## **Desert Research Institute Senior Leadership Team**

Dr. Kumud Acharya, President  
Vic Etyemezian, Ph.D., Interim Vice President for Research  
Naresh Kumar, Ph.D., Exec. Dir. for Atmospheric Sciences  
Tim Minor, Interim Exec. Dir. for Earth and Ecosystem Sciences  
Sean McKenna, Ph.D., Exec. Dir. for Hydrologic Sciences  
Peter Ross, Asst. Vice Pres. for Campus Planning and Physical Plant  
Brandon Peterson, Asst. Vice Pres. for IT and Research Computing  
Tracy Bower, Director of External Affairs  
Jennifer Schultz, Director of Human Resources  
Lindsay Sessions, Controller  
Eric Wilcox, Ph.D., Faculty Senate Chair  
Robert Gagosian, Ph.D., Senior Advisor to the President  
Iris Stewart, Special Assistant to the President

## **Strategic Plan Development Lead**

Amanda Keen-Zebert, Ph.D.



At DRI, **Impactful Science, Community, and Diversity** are the core values that we uphold and seek to serve above all else.



AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [WWW.DRI.EDU/STRATEGICPLAN2025](http://WWW.DRI.EDU/STRATEGICPLAN2025)



**Northern Nevada Science Center**  
2215 Raggio Parkway  
Reno, Nevada 89512  
(775) 673-7300

**Southern Nevada Science Center**  
755 East Flamingo Road  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89119  
(702) 862-5400