



Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources Strategic Visioning Statement– July 2021

During the 2020-21 academic year, the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources (RSENR) conducted a strategic planning process to guide bold thinking for the School into the future. With RSENR's distinctive interdisciplinary approach to research and education, interdisciplinary faculty, experiential learning and place-based education models, close-knit community, and social and environmental justice imperative, the School is uniquely positioned to play a role in transforming human-environment systems. RSENR faculty, staff, students, and board of advisors explored a core strategic question: *How can RSENR unleash empathy, passion, innovation, and creativity to heal and radically change human-environment systems in a just, equitable, and ecological direction?* The School identified core and enabling strategies foundational to its Strategic Plan.

Core Strategies

- **Change the narrative to be increasingly biocentric, just, and equitable.**

RSENR needs to change the narrative around how humans interact with the environment to be increasingly biocentric and ecologically driven. The School must focus on the criticality of healthy ecosystems, nature, and biodiversity as essential for human health and wellbeing in a way that sustainably balances human activity with ecosystems, nature, and biodiversity to ensure secure and abundant food, water, medicine, and fuel.

- **Focus research on human-environment health and balance.**

To change the narrative and set the stage for healing and radical change, RSENR must focus on applied, collaborative, sustainable, solutions-oriented research in response to the challenges impacting human-environment health. Research must be reciprocal and fully engage the School community in the research process, insight gathering, and solutions development.

- **Create an expanding, inclusive, life-long impactful learning experience and community.**

To expand its learning community, RSENR must focus on life-long learning and radically transform the student recruitment process by expanding how learning is offered and making it increasingly equitable and just. Seamlessly intertwining online, place-based, hands-on, and service-learning opportunities creates a rich experience. Transformed delivery and cost structures make learning more accessible and affordable.

- **Collaborate to expand and redefine expertise, leverage networks, and reach globally.**

Expanding interdisciplinary collaboration, new partnerships, and a global presence will further excellence and innovation in research and education and assist in networking and recruitment of lifelong learners and contributors. The RSENR community must focus on shared power, team building, communications, intercultural competence, multiple ways of knowing, and facilitation in its professional and curricular development. Arts and humanities and creativity and expression are critical pathways to wellbeing and unleashing empathy.

Enabling Strategies

- **Reframe and harness technology to overcome barriers to radical change.**

RSENR must embrace technological tools that facilitate and encourage interaction across space and time, including open technology, artificial intelligence, and open data. This requires investment in staff, faculty, and students acquiring skills to optimally use and apply technology.

- **Prepare RSENR to embrace and create change – Change by design.**

RSENR must apply approaches to allow people to be adaptive and open to change through the application of best practices in change management. Collaboration and resource sharing and the application of open data and open science can revolutionize how work is done and how people interact in the School.

- **Create time spaciousness.**

RSENR must consider how to apply nontraditional timelines for students, faculty, and staff and to use technology to create on-demand fluid timing for individuals and the community to remove obstacles, lessen inequity, and build flexibility and resilience within the School.