



TC COMMITMENTS A VISION AND ACTION PLAN

Pursuing the Public Good through Impact and Influence

March 2025

Teachers College
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

A Graduate School of Education, Health & Psychology



TC COMMITMENTS: A VISION AND ACTION PLAN



“I have never cared too much what people say. What I am interested in is what they do.”

- SHIRLEY CHISHOLM
Teachers College alumna (M.A. '52)

BACKGROUND: TC COMMITMENTS

As the leading school of education, health and psychology in the nation, TC has a long and consequential history of advancing the public good. Animated by this legacy, and compelled to make sure TC continues to serve the greatest good, we have developed a vision and action statement through which we hold ourselves accountable to our students and alumni, to our faculty, to our board, to our partners, our staff and to the public as we strive for impact and continued learning.

In June 2023, TC’s Board of Trustees approved a refreshed mission statement that galvanized the TC Community around common goals:

To empower committed learners and leaders to build a smarter, healthier, more just and equitable world through multidisciplinary knowledge creation, policy engagement, and practice innovations across education, psychology, and health.

In July 2023, President Tom Bailey appointed Provost KerryAnn O’Meara to lead a series of dialogues with faculty, students and staff to build consensus around the commitments we make as we continue to bring our mission to life.

This work includes a guiding vision, commitments, and a set of initiatives that build on the five current College priorities:

- Building the optimal academic organization
- Institutionalize a culture that supports our community
- Enhancing student pathways
- Advancing research for a better world
- Leading in digital innovation.





PURSING THE PUBLIC GOOD

The major challenges facing society cannot be solved by one discipline or field but require interdisciplinary approaches. Teachers College has been and will continue to be a generative incubator for solutions to complex problems in education, health and psychology. We will make meaningful contributions to the public good by focusing our teaching, scholarship and partnership in areas that can have the greatest impact and influence. To that end, our Public Good Initiative will catalyze our efforts in four areas: A.I. and Digital Innovation; Mental Health and Wellness; Sustainability; and Teacher Education and Literacy. We will continue such efforts to form strong bridges among our programs, communities of practice and alumni, bringing research and creative activity, pedagogy and learning innovations and professional development to bear on these key issues. As we develop these focus areas, we will consider choosing additional themes to pursue.

Over the course of a series of dialogues and workshops held in FY24 with faculty, students, staff, alumnae, and College leadership, we have developed an outline of commitments and actions that emerge from the TC mission and culture, but had not yet been formally articulated. Although published in July, 2024, this will be a living document. We will hold ourselves accountable to these commitments and goals – and commit to transparency – by tracking and measuring our progress through a series of metrics that will be shared in Fall 24. (See appendix A for details and process background on the dialogues.)

OUR VISION

TC faculty, students, staff and graduates lead in tackling the greatest challenges in education, health and psychology. We lead with our values, through scholarship, teaching, the development of talent and partnership and with innovation and urgency to impact the public good.





GUIDING VALUES

We are led by guiding values that reflect our history, our present contexts and our vision for TC, and its members.

1. Care and Compassion

We recognize the humanity in each other and seek to make TC a place where all members feel cared for, sustained, and nourished as part of a community.

2. Purpose and Passion

We act to improve human flourishing and the public good.

3. Agency and Growth

Our purpose and passion pursue the highest forms of knowing, doing and being.

4. Critical Openness

We recognize that effective learning combines critical thinking and adaptability to new ideas, perspectives, and information. We question assumptions, engage in thoughtful analysis, and integrate diverse viewpoints and knowledge sources.

5. Community and Inclusion

Our identities, languages, and experiences are integral to our commitment to excellence; we learn from and seek to leverage all of the talent in our community to achieve our goals.

6. Creativity

We learn through experimentation, play and messiness; we believe in invitations and provocations to revise, engage and innovate; to engage in hospitable imagination.

7. Humanity & Humility

We are all co-learners and co-creators of knowledge. Learning is a recursive process and to learn, we must remain critically open.

OUR FOCUS AREAS

We promote the public good through our research, the education of our students, our work with policy makers and practitioners, and across College operations and management. We will achieve impact through the following focus areas:

1. Promoting Faculty Excellence in Research and Teaching: We ensure excellence in research, teaching and mentorship, and leadership.

2. Advancing Student Success: We prepare our students to achieve their goals and for success as leaders in their fields.

3. Inviting and Sustaining Partnerships: We expand impact through partnerships, ensuring we apply developing technologies and engage partners to craft policy and practice solutions together.

4. Investing in an Agile and Effective Institution: We strive to build infrastructure and systems that ensure we are responsive to evolving challenges and leverage the wisdom of our talented constituents.





PROMOTING FACULTY EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Vision: Excellent faculty are the foundation of our institution. TC will attract and sustain the highest caliber of faculty who are leaders and innovators in their fields. Our efforts around building the optimal academic organization are a method to engage faculty and support what they do best: build the field of future leaders, conduct and share research, advise and mentor students, innovate in the delivery of their academic programs, and act as intellectual leaders in their fields. We will also equip them with a thorough knowledge of the latest educational technologies. Recruiting game-changing faculty enables us to remain competitive and drive relevant, impactful and inclusive scholarship that advances a smarter, healthier, and more equitable world. Student recruitment, external funding and the College's impact and influence are all shaped by the talent we attract and support.

Commitments

- We are committed to recruiting, retaining and supporting a talented faculty from many backgrounds who are leading knowledge creation and transmission in their fields.
- We are committed to creating an infrastructure to support faculty success in securing significant public and private grant funding.
- We are committed to supporting faculty as they continue to advance skills in using the latest technological developments for their teaching and research, in communication and translation of research insights on complex problems and in integrating issues of diversity, equity and cultural competence into their work.
- We are committed to creating stronger professional career pathways and professional development for our lecturers.

Initiatives

1. Implement search processes that are competitive, fair, and inviting, which attract candidates from many backgrounds to apply. Improve career pathways for lecturers, working closely with faculty governance bodies.
2. Expand equity and inclusion through review and reform of policies, procedures, and engagement with faculty governance bodies as needed such as expanding promotion criteria to be inclusive of engaged and interdisciplinary scholarship and improve career pathways for lecturers.
3. Continue to strengthen our infrastructure to promote research funding through professional development, mentoring and expanded administrative support.
4. Strengthen faculty development and support by creating a centralized digital repository, communication and sharing of resources, professional development opportunities, information, policies and mentoring opportunities. The digital resource will support faculty research, public good initiatives, teaching, and public writing and will include resources for postdocs and doctoral students preparing for academic careers.
5. Create more routine opportunities and incentives for building community and encouraging cross program collaborations in teaching and research such as team-teaching, flash-talks, challenge grants on public good projects and public good collaborations.





PROMOTING STUDENT SUCCESS

Vision: Our students become agents in the world who can take on global challenges and who contribute meaningfully to the public good. Their TC educational experience is relationship rich, transformational and agency-enhancing. Students encounter the latest research and knowledge in their fields, digital innovation, community-based learning, pedagogy, curriculum, policies and practices that value diversity, and espouse inclusion and equity. TC students benefit directly from the many identities and experiences at TC and are supported in taking full advantage of opportunities for our broader community in New York City. Throughout their TC experience, students encounter supportive and transparent financial aid, advising, registration and student employment systems. Talented students are attracted to study at TC and graduate with improved capacities to use their talent to serve the public good. Alumni stay connected to the TC community through spaces cultivated for them—spaces for professional development, resilience, peer support and continued learning.

Commitments

- We are committed to creating and nurturing an engaged and inclusive environment for all students, providing resources and community to meet their needs. We are committed to ensuring that every student feels a sense of belonging, and that the social capital acquired as part of the TC experience is shared among all students.
- We are committed to student success and to improving/strengthening core systems that scaffold their pathways/experience: recruitment, financial aid, advising, professional and career development and student employment.
- We are committed to creating and nurturing an engaged and inclusive environment for all students, with particular attention to recruiting and supporting those who are first generation, international, students of color, and have disabilities. We are committed to ensuring that every student feels a sense of belonging, and that the social capital acquired as part of the TC experience is shared among all students.

- We are committed to having a life-long relationship with our students and preparing students with resilience for the challenges ahead, to be nimble and responsive, and especially to supporting our teachers after they graduate and begin to work in schools to further our goal of building an excellent teacher corps.

Initiatives

1. Invest in marketing and outreach to reach an even greater number of potential students from across the US and world.
2. Measurably improve financial aid programming to increase transparency, clarity, equity and responsiveness. Fundraise and allocate College operating funds to financial aid with the goal of increasing support generally and providing full, four-year funding for doctoral fellowships.
3. Ensure that innovation and flexibility are hallmarks of the student experience through providing opportunities for optimal course offerings and delivery methods (e.g. signature experiences, winter term, non-credit) as well as options for learning and applying cutting edge educational technology and artificial intelligence.
4. Improve student pathways to success through excellent advising, career development and professional development opportunities, as well as clear communication about academic program requirements, guidelines and resources.
5. Develop stronger bridges between academic program faculty, students and alumni through structured programs, communications and events.





INVITING AND SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

Vision: We are committed to mutually rewarding, effective and successful partnerships with practitioners and policymakers beyond our campus. We recognize that collaborative partnerships are vital to teaching, learning and influencing the public good, as well as sources for research and funding. By encouraging, tracking and promoting collaborative work, we hold ourselves accountable to being strong and strategic partners. We will invest in infrastructure that supports and sustains long-term partnerships so that we can track our progress and outcomes and recognize and celebrate our partner contributions in the context of community engaged research, teaching and life-long learning.

Commitments

- We are committed to being responsive partners who co-learn and co-create knowledge and solutions that are relevant, informed and transformative.
- We are committed to opening our campus and resources to partners and to ensuring there are tangible public good benefits to partnering with TC faculty, students and staff.
- We are committed to coordinating, communicating and recognizing the processes of partnership and the impacts of our partnerships.
- We are committed to actively seeking ways to partner with other higher education institutions, schools and school districts, non-profits, policymakers and government to serve the public good, shape policy, and provide professional learning and exchange for practitioners.

Initiatives

1. Create a community engagement hub to strengthen coordination and communication of community-engaged work via data collection, communications, TC hosted exhibitions and virtual spaces through which to share projects, CE flash talks and tracking consequential research outcomes.
2. Invest greater focus, energy and resources in TC partnerships with neighboring Districts 4 and 5, supporting our teacher education programs, preparation of teacher educators and outreach programs, in the service of school and community goals.
3. Facilitate the development of new memoranda of understanding between programs and other higher education institutions, and non-profits to enhance pathways into TC, field-placements and technology transfer.
4. Identify, fundraise for and invest in faculty-driven public good projects that scale impact on a national and international landscape.



INVESTING IN TC AS A REPRESENTATIVE, EFFECTIVE AND AGILE INSTITUTION:

Vision: TC is an effective, agile and innovative organization, a good steward of resources and sustainability, and a place where policies and practices support our work. Through analysis of our academic programs, we align our programs with student needs, leverage faculty expertise and develop offerings in a variety of formats, so we are set up to thrive financially and ensure our programs and students can have the greatest impact. TC students, faculty and staff experience TC as a community where members care for one another and where faculty and staff work together across departments and roles on challenges and opportunities. Our courses and research dissemination reflect digital innovation. We are constantly innovating by reviewing policies and practices to ensure opportunities for career growth and advancement and fuller participation for all community members.

Commitments

- We are committed to having the most current, responsive, excellent and in-demand academic programs.
- We are committed to digital innovation and to delivering our courses, research projects and programs using the latest technology.
- We are committed to caring for each other as part of a community, and for the College.
- We are committed to ensuring TC grows and evolves by leveraging and valuing the many experiences and differences within our community.
- We are committed to investing in our people and their well-being and advancement and to creating the conditions that allow each individual to fully participate and thrive at TC and in the world.
- We are committed to exchange and connection—and fostering ongoing communication and collaboration across faculty, staff and student roles.

Initiatives

1. Periodic review of academic programs for enrollment, staffing, size, format and resources, and support program-driven reforms in order to be responsive to evolving fields and shifting student markets.
2. Design and implement innovative online programs and noncredit professional studies offerings and recognition for courses and/or programs excelling in digital innovation.
3. Build a technological infrastructure and professional development opportunities to promote digital innovation so that our courses, research projects and programs are using the latest technologies and our faculty and students are fully equipped to work and learn effectively in the evolving digital age.
4. Strengthen our communications function to maximize the impact of our research on practice and policy, ensuring thought leadership and increased visibility among donors and policymakers.
5. Strengthen opportunities for staff onboarding, professional development, performance review, stretch goals and recognition of outstanding performance.
6. Create more opportunities for communication and community building across roles and units of the College.



APPENDIX A: DIALOGUES PROCESS

In June 2023 Teachers College affirmed a new mission statement, describing and anchoring TC's purpose. In Fall 2023 President Tom Bailey appointed Provost KerryAnn O'Meara to lead a series of dialogues with faculty, students and staff regarding the commitments we have to students, scholarship, NYC and our partners and to each other and the College.

Throughout the 2023–24 academic year, TC held 12 dialogues and workshops and provided opportunities for all members of the TC community to contribute ideas via an online portal. Transcripts were produced and themes were identified from each session. The themes focused on our commitments and actions we might take to enact those commitments as part of a vision and action plan.

The Provost's office reviewed these themes iteratively with facilitators and discussed results with President Bailey and the President's cabinet, creating thematic statements and potential activities to engage in as part of a Vision and Action plan. The TC Commitments draft was further discussed with FEC, the Student Senate, SA86SC, TC's Board and Alumni Council. In April 2024, members of our student, staff and faculty community were given the opportunity to provide feedback.

This document is a result of these discussions and activities. The President and Provost's offices will work together to identify metrics to assess success over time in each of our areas of vision and action. The TC Commitments Vision and Action Plan was published on the TC website in 2024 and will remain a living document. Updates to each of the planned activities and reporting on metrics identified for tracking the success of each commitment will be available on the TC website.

