

# THE ADAPTIVE LIBRARY

## Hunter Library Strategic Priorities 2022+

Office of the Dean of Library Services  
Western Carolina University



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## What Is An “Adaptive” Library?

Libraries serving academic institutions face significant challenges that range from changing user expectations and behaviors, unsustainable year-to-year increases in the costs of information resources, competition from for-profit information service providers, rapidly changing needs for new skill sets and greater diversity within the library workforce, and increasing pressure from institutional funders and decision-makers for the library to more clearly assess and explain its contributions to the institutional mission.

At the same time, there are abundant opportunities for academic libraries to do more, and to engage with users in new ways. This combination of challenges and opportunities in a world of finite resources means that libraries need both clearly-stated priorities to guide decisions, and the ability to respond quickly and evolve as external circumstances change.

The following statement of strategic priorities explains Hunter Library’s continuing priorities as well as examples of more immediate aspirations and objectives for the organization. These priorities are framed around the themes of adaptation and sustainability, meaning:

1. Evolving quickly in response to continual and often rapid environmental changes.
2. Anticipating and responding in innovative ways to changing circumstances.
3. Ongoing environmental monitoring and analysis; agility in changing and adjusting; and robust and iterative evaluation practices.
4. Valuing organizational experimentation and learning from experiences.
5. Delivering high-value services and resources that can be sustained through periods of both abundance and scarcity.

On behalf of the library’s leadership team, I hope this document makes clear that Hunter Library is committed to maintaining our tradition of excellent core services, but also anticipating and responding in innovative ways to the challenges and opportunities we face.

*Chuck Thomas*  
Dean of Library Services

## Our Mission

**Brief Version:** Hunter Library supports lifelong learning, discovery, and engagement. We enrich student learning, facilitate research, and engage with our community and users by providing services and resources that help them succeed and grow.

**Long Version:** Hunter Library is integral to the mission of Western Carolina University. We provide scholarly information resources and tools, expert instructional and advisory services, inclusive physical and virtual spaces, and employees dedicated to helping users explore, discover, learn, and produce new scholarly and creative works. The library supports WCU's regional engagement mission through local partnerships and other activities to collect, preserve, and make available the rich intellectual, cultural, and environmental heritage of the region.

## Our Vision

- The library is a center for lifelong learning and enriching experiences;
- We expand users' expectations of what they can find and do in the library;
- We are responsive to our users' changing library needs and expectations;
- We help users understand and respond to ongoing societal transformations;
- Our spaces and services are welcoming, accessible, and encourage diversity, intellectual curiosity, and freedom of scholarly and creative expression.

## Our Commitments

- We will prioritize library resources and services that support Western Carolina University's mission.
- We will be responsible and trustworthy stewards of the resources we are given.
- We will be open to innovative thinking, testing new ideas, and change.
- We will rely upon data and evidence to inform important organizational decisions.
- We will prioritize partnerships as key to future sustainability and resilience.
- We will seek new ways to operationalize and model diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- We will value feedback from the community we serve.
- We will set ambitious goals and will hold ourselves accountable for achieving them.

## Our Values

Our organizational values are shaped by the American Library Association, the Association of College and Research Libraries, and related professions:

- Provide excellent service to every library user;
- User-centered approaches to service design and delivery in both physical and virtual environments;
- Intellectual freedom and freedom of inquiry;
- Protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality;
- Freedom of equitable access to information and information services;
- Respect intellectual property rights and advocate for balance between the interests of information users and those of rights holders through policy and educational programming;
- Resistance to all efforts to censor library resources;
- Support academic integrity and deterring plagiarism through policy and education;
- Treat both library users and co-workers with fairness and respect;
- Advocate for the rights, safety, and welfare of members of our community; and
- Provide an environment that is welcoming and safe for all those who wish to use the library, regardless of identity or differences.

We support Western Carolina University's **Strategic Direction 3: Inclusive Excellence** to "prepare our students for the diverse world in which they live". Our library offers support to help all members of the WCU community develop intercultural knowledge and skills that are critical for effective citizenship in the 21st century. In support of these goals, we strive to eliminate barriers to information access, foster increased community with our underrepresented and underserved populations, and build our capacity for cross-cultural and intergenerational engagement.

We value the well-being of our community and visitors, and invite you to join us in creating an environment that embraces our values.

# How to Read Hunter Library's Strategic Priorities

Each of the following strategic priorities includes sections for:

- **Aspirational outcomes** that we will achieve or be able to say are true about the library over the next 3-5 years.
- **Performance metrics** we will develop and use to measure our progress toward each aspirational outcome.
- Identification of the **WCU strategic direction(s)** with which each library priority aligns.
- Linkage of each library strategic priority to relevant **SACSCOC accreditation** standards and principles.

As part of implementing these priorities, Hunter Library and other partners on campus will develop and utilize performance metrics and SACSCOC linkages to guide regular assessment and reporting on our progress.

## Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: The Hub of Library Strategic Priorities

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are shared elements of everything Hunter Library does and offers to our community. We integrate DEI into all library strategic planning and goal-setting. Our facilities, services, and programs are intended to be accessible and inclusive. We actively review and evaluate all aspects of library operations, to identify and remove barriers to equity and access. Additionally, the library provides strong collections and programming to help users better understand DEI, anti-racism, and related concepts, and to be better prepared to work for a more equitable future.

The library's DEI efforts connect to and directly support Western Carolina University's strategic emphasis on "Inclusive Excellence" and its related five pillars:

- Access & Success
- Institutional Climate & Belonging
- Curriculum & Scholarship
- Infrastructure & Commitments
- Community & Partnerships.

To advance our DEI work and commitments, beginning in Summer 2022 Hunter Library will begin work on a related DEI Strategic Plan. That plan will incorporate and add greater structure to what we already are doing, expand the scope of our work, and define goals and benchmarks to measure our success in coming years. The DEI Strategic Plan will guide new work in areas such as training and professional development to cultivate cultural competencies among library faculty and staff; and ways we can foster an inclusive work environment that attracts and retains a diverse library workforce.

## Strategic Priority 1: Adaptive & Sustainable Collections

### Aspirational Outcomes:

- Information resources are responsive to and align with WCU programs and priorities.
- The library provides access to high-quality and trustworthy information resources that reflect diverse scholarly perspectives.
- Growing collections of electronic resources increase options for discovery, access, and use of library materials.
- Print and electronic collections are managed effectively using modern analytical methods.
- Cooperative partnerships significantly increase users' access to other scholarly materials not owned or licensed by Hunter Library.
- The library develops and maintains robust capabilities and capacity to create, manage, and provide access to born-digital and retrospectively-digitized collections and data.
- Distinctive special collections document the full range of individuals and groups that have contributed to the region's history.
- The library highlights and provides access to the scholarly and creative works produced by faculty, students, and other members of the WCU community.

Performance Indicators and Metrics: TBD during implementation.

Supports WCU Strategic Direction 1 (**Academic Excellence**)

Linkage to SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation* : TBD during implementation.

## Strategic Priority 2: Adaptive Services & Programs

### Aspirational Outcomes:

- Formal library instruction and expert consulting services are responsive to and align with existing and emerging user and curricular needs.
- Library services and programs prepare students to successfully search, find, evaluate, and use trustworthy information responsibly.
- Inclusive and engaging library services and programs strongly support informal learning, student enrichment, and creative expression.
- Library physical and virtual services and programs are integrative with other WCU student-focused centers and services.
- The library effectively measures and explains its direct contributions to student success, faculty productivity, and institutional program accreditations.
- Library programs and services are discoverable and accessible in a variety of physical and virtual spaces that are relevant to users.

Performance Indicators and Metrics: TBD during implementation.

Supports WCU Strategic Direction 1 (**Academic Excellence**)

Supports WCU Strategic Direction 2 (**Student Experience**)

Linkage to SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation* : TBD during implementation.



## Strategic Priority 3: Adaptive Environments for Improved UX

### Aspirational Outcomes:

- Library physical and virtual spaces are welcoming, engaging, and adaptable to accommodate individual and group work.
- Library physical and virtual environments are user-centric and shaped by methods drawn from the fields of Universal Design and User Experience.
- Resources, service points, and other locations within the library are easy to find.
- Library technology enhances the experience of connecting people with needed information and services.
- The library is a shared university asset and provides opportunities for stakeholders to participate in its current and future design.
- Library physical spaces, exhibits, and decorations reflect and celebrate scholarly and creative contributions of diverse people and groups important to the university.
- The library encourages experimentation and testing non-traditional uses of library space.
- The library provides spaces and social environments for sharing ideas and building community among users.

Performance Indicators and Metrics: TBD during implementation.

Supports WCU Strategic Direction 2 (**Student Experience**)

Supports WCU Strategic Direction 6 (**Responsible Stewardship**)

Linkage to SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation* : TBD during implementation.

## Strategic Priority 4: Adaptive Staffing & Expertise

### Aspirational Outcomes:

- The library recruits, trains, and develops for the skills needed in a 21st century university library.
- The library provides robust onboarding and mentoring of all new library employees.
- The library strongly supports high-value continuing education, professional development, and professional growth opportunities for all library employees.
- The library values employees from diverse backgrounds, and tests and evaluates new approaches to diversity recruitment.
- Physical and virtual work spaces for library employees are modern, safe, and secure.
- Library employees' job descriptions and associated compensation accurately reflect 21st century library work.

Performance Indicators and Metrics: TBD during implementation.

Supports WCU Strategic Direction 5 (**Employee Excellence**)

Linkage to SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation* : TBD during implementation.

## Strategic Priority 5: Adaptive & Effective Organization

### Aspirational Outcomes:

- Organizational health is a priority (communication, healthy and safe environments, equity and inclusion, employee recognition, employee growth and development).
- Library administration prioritizes strengthening and increasing philanthropic support for the library.
- Library administration pursues new approaches for increasing and sustaining both recurring and non-recurring funding for the library.
- Library administration provides clear guidance to employees on organizational decision-making and communication roles and processes.
- The library provides opportunities for external institutional stakeholders to participate in strategic direction-setting and advocacy for the library.
- The library's organizational structure aligns with its strategic directions and operational needs.
- Strong collaborative relationships with other libraries and consortia are a key component of the library's sustainability strategy.

Performance Indicators and Metrics: TBD during implementation.

Supports WCU Strategic Direction 7 (**Vision Advancement**)

Linkage to SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation* : TBD during implementation.