

A.T.L.A.S. to Our Next Level of Excellence





Voorhees University is a private historically black liberal arts institution affiliated with the Episcopal Church, whose mission is to produce highly qualified graduates who coalesce intellect and faith in pursuit of life-long learning, healthy living, the betterment of society, and an abiding faith in God.



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A Vision for Voorhees University

As its 10th President, I am honored to serve at the helm of historic Voorhees University, the first HBCU founded by an African American woman, Elizabeth Evelyn Wright. I deem it a privilege and blessing to serve and propel Voorhees University to its next level of greatness, impact, and excellence. I am delighted to share the vision for advancing the institution through the Strategic Plan 2022–2027: The Next Level of Excellence at Voorhees University.

In celebration of 125 years of the tradition of academic excellence and service, the strategic plan process provides a roadmap to further advance avenues for transformation, strengthened resources, continued success, enhanced innovation, and increased global



Ronnie Hopkins, Ph.D.President of Voorhees University

impact. The plan illuminates cutting-edge development for teaching, learning, and research, for creativity and diversity, and for effective outreach, engagement, and resource stewardship. Ultimately, the strategic plan provides heightened direction for effective leadership, exponential growth, and enhanced academic distinction at Voorhees University.

The University Executive Cabinet, Senior Leadership, and institutional constituents are keenly aware of the critical need to assess the strategic plan and approach it from the perspective of being dynamic and flexible, accompanied by resilient fiscal stability and effective resource management. The University's positionality of the strategic planning process focuses on: reviewing the institutional mission, formulating goals, objectives, and action steps, as well as, developing a plan for monitoring implementation, tracking progress, revising the plan as needed, and ensuring that all standards required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) are considered in the process. The strategic plan is anchored in the philosophy and directly parallels the critical focus of the University's mission as such:

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Further, the strategic planning process is developed with the keen understanding of the University's accreditation status and processes in mind. Recently, the University completed the decennial review by SACSCOC. The University is exceedingly proud of SACSCOC's judgement to reaffirm the institution's accreditation for ten years through 2032. In 2021, the University sought and was granted approval by SACSCOC for change from Level II -- Authorization to offer Baccalaureate degree to Level III -- Authorization to offer Master's degrees. Thus, the approval permitted Voorhees University to offer its first master's degree during the history of the institution. The strategic plan includes development of additional Master's degree programs and submission of authorization to Level IV - Authorization to offer Doctorate degrees ensuring development of relevant, high demand academic programs that uplift the ambition our of students and increase their social mobility.

Kent John Chabotar, president emeritus of Guilford College and a college finance expert, has admonished that colleges with 1,000 or fewer students, in rural areas, without large endowments, and without market niches, are on the path to closure. Certainly, I agree with President Chabotar and offer that in addition to expanding and stabilizing enrollment, Voorhees University must seek diverse funding opportunities, including increased external grant funding and foundation support, optimized federal contracts, cultivation of private donors, and enhanced alumni and board giving and support. As such, the strategic plan addresses enrollment increase and right-sizing the University as an institutional priority. The comprehensive Enrollment Management strategic plan has begun to assess issues of efficiency and effectiveness related to recruitment, enrollment, retention, and customer service. The four-pronged approach serves as the initial attempt to mitigate issues and optimize conditions for successful enrollment. The ultimate goal is to realize maximized enrollment, increased retention, enhanced student satisfaction, and improved graduation rates.

As Voorhees University develops strategies to increase enrollment, identifying strategies for varied resource development is equally imperative. The strategic plan advances the essential journey of aggressively expanding external grant funding, leading to foundation support. External funding intersects with a larger vision for systemic change in fundraising strategies and trajectory that will significantly increase the awareness of the University as a national leader and as a high-performing, academically and research-sound institution. More specifically, external funding will greatly assist Voorhees University in establishing broad, impactful, transformational educational opportunities for first- and second-year learners, learners in transition, online learners, adult learners, and international learners.

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Inspired by The Most Reverend Michael Curry, the 27th Presiding Bishop and Primate and the first African American Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the strategic plan addresses the critical development of strengthening beloved community. The Becoming Beloved Community Initiative at Voorhees University includes the following major platforms: (1) implementation of the Institutes for Social and Environmental Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion, (2) establishment of the Center for Women's Advancement and Empowerment, (3) launch of the Rural Community Development Institute, (3) enhanced support and partnership with local and surrounding school districts, (4) strengthening partnerships between historic Voorhees University and Saint Augustine's University, the only two remaining Episcopal HBCUs in the nation.

The motivation for the Institutes for Social and Environmental Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion at Voorhees University is to inculcate social and environmental change as a critical part of the very fabric of the institution. Inspiration from the following quote and scriptures direct the agenda: "The fierce urgency of now! " Martin Luther King, Jr.; "Enough! You've corrupted justice long enough, you've let the wicked get away with murder. You're here to defend the defenseless, to make sure that underdogs get a fair break; Your job is to stand up for the powerless, and prosecute all those who exploit them." (Psalm 82:3 Message Bible), and "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow-t (Isaiah 1:17 NIV) - The Institute will proactively engage in promising practices to optimize transformative considerations in social and environmental justice and actively implement a social and environmental change plan that will directly engage students, faculty, staff, and community constituents.

To our dismay, the City of Denmark and the County of Bamberg in South Carolina, the home of Voorhees University, hold the infamous federal designation as a Promise Zone and an Empowerment Zone rendering the areas among the poorest in the nation. As an act of Beloved Community, the strategic plan views the current disposition as an opportunity to employ the Rural Community Development Institute (RCDI) at Voorhees University. The impetus for the RCDI is anchored in Matthew 25: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25 NIV). The RCDI will conduct the Voorhees University Community-wide Needs Assessment in the City of Denmark, Bamberg County, and surrounding areas to frame our intentional work and engagement alongside our beloved community members. The University seeks to expand experiential learning opportunities for students and faculty, and to aggressively search for federal and other external funding to support our campus and external communities and establish systemic means of Becoming Beloved Community.

A Vision for Voorhees University



Hence, the strategic plan is designed to celebrate the University's unapologetic commitment to liberal arts and transformative education and clear understanding of how these educational approaches serve as the foundation for undergraduate and graduate teaching, research, and service, thus reflecting the historic mission and impact of Voorhees University. The Core Strategic Goals of the plan include: Strategic Priority 1: Academic Excellence and Student Success, Strategic Priority 2: Talent Acquisition & Management, Strategic Priority 3: Leverage/Leadership, Strategic Priority 4: Accountability, and Strategic Priority 5: Stability and Sustainability. The five-year plan, Strategic Plan 2022-2027 provides Voorhees University the A.T.L.A.S. to Our Next Level of Excellence.



UNIVERSITY CAMPUS & OUR COMMUNITY

Founded in 1897 by Elizabeth Evelyn Wright Menafee, Voorhees University holds the distinction as the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) founded by an African American woman. Historically, Voorhees University's mission has been to offer all students a quality comprehensive general education, coupled with professional education, in a value-centered liberal arts tradition. In addition, Voorhees was the first HBCU in South Carolina accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

OUR COMMUNITY



The campus of Voorhees University, which is designated as an Historic District in South Carolina, consists of 378 acres in Bamberg County in the city of Denmark. Voorhees is about 50 miles south of Columbia, 80 miles northwest of Charleston, and 53 miles southeast of Augusta, Georgia. Denmark, SC is not only the home of Voorhees University, but sister two-year institution, Denmark Technical College, is also located adjacent to the campus of Voorhees.



ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Voorhees University offers 18 undergraduate degrees: Accounting, Biology, Business Administration, Child Development, Criminal Justice, Computer Science, English, Environmental Science, Hotel and Hospitality Management, Interdisciplinary Studies, Psychology, Public Health, Sociology, Sports Management, Emergency Management, Mass Communication, Organizational Management, and Theological Studies. The University offers the Master of Education in Teaching and Learning with concentrations in PK-12 Education and Education Systems Improvement.

The Center of Excellence for Educator Preparation and Innovation (EPI) at Voorhees University aims to: (1) create equitable learning outcomes for students in underserved, high need areas and subjects by creating innovative pathways and models for increasing teacher effectiveness, (2) address teacher shortages, and (3) diversify the teacher workforce in South Carolina and the nation.

The Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) is an exciting opportunity that builds upon Voorhees University's mantra: The Next Level of Excellence: Begin. Believe. Become. Students at Voorhees Begin their journey to unlimited careers starting in the first year of college. We Believe our students can go anywhere they desire. Through strategized curriculum enhancements and co-curricular engagement, from freshman through senior year, our guided career pathways provide the career keys and professional competencies necessary for students to be successful in college leading to unlimited career choices. Our ultimate goal is for each student to graduate and Become the world's next greatest professionals.

INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS

Voorhees University Tigers Athletics is currently a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), affiliated with the Continental Athletic Conference of the NAIA. At Voorhees, we offer ten competitive sports: men's and women's basketball, baseball, softball, men and women's cross country, men and women's indoor track and field, and men and women's outdoor track and field.

BY THE NUMBERS



- **30** full-time faculty members with **46%** holding doctoral and terminal degrees
- 10:1 Student / Faculty Ratio
- Undergraduate Enrollment of nearly 500 students
- \$19,976 tuition and on-campus residential living (\$12,630 off-campus living)



THE HBCU CHALLENGE: A VOORHEES OPPORTUNITY

Students are demanding high quality resources and HBCUs are constantly challenged with doing more with less money. In fact, fifty-five percent of HBCU presidents indicate that their institutions had considered reevaluating their current business models in an effort to find financial stability. According to institutional statistics, HBCU finances are primarily driven by tuition and donations, yet enrollment has dropped by nearly 53% from 2010 to 2019. While some prestigious historically black colleges such as Howard University are enjoying high profile faculty appointments and prestige, many other HBCUs are fighting for survival. Pandemic relief is helping, but without more funding, these circumstances will continue to deter enrollment. Some, especially smaller private colleges, have been fighting for their survival for years, with weak endowments, aging buildings, and steady enrollment declines, all made worse by the coronavirus pandemic. Indeed, many larger HBCUs have been recognized and have a resurgence of the funding resources necessary to attract accomplished students, faculty and staff. However, our smaller institutions require donors to recognize our worth and increase contributions to provide requisite financial resources to enable us to not only survive, but to thrive. As a matter of serious perspective, overall enrollment in historically Black colleges has declined 11% in the most recent 10-year period for which data is available, from 325,609 in 2010 to 289,507 in 2019. Enrollment at some campuses dropped by half during that span, and several administrators said enrollments dropped further during the coronavirus pandemic last year. As a rule, historically Black colleges also haven't had the fundraising ability of other universities.



Over the last five years, Voorhees has experienced variance in its student population, funding, and student retention. In order to move this historical institution forward in a positive manner, an aggressive strategic plan must find flexible, innovative methods of instruction and intervention to assist students in achieving success. Innovation in educating students challenges us to be proactive in advising and policy making to seek a more individualized approach to accommodating student needs as well as promoting student success. More so, these phenomena challenge our Institution to seek investment from external stakeholders as well as increased cooperation and collaboration with business, community, and industry to provide learning opportunities, service prospects, and currency of curriculum to create a more forward-looking, future-oriented institution of higher education. Indeed, the strategic plan serves as the A.T.L.A.S. to the Next Level of Excellence to mitigate the aforementioned circumstances and reality for our HBCU.

S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

- Low tuition (marketing item)
- Small classes with current ratio of 10:1
- 378 acres of land (room for growth)
- Strong athletic department
- Fosters an environment of spiritual growth
- Fosters a culture of family
- Proactive student engagement
- Proactive partnerships with the community
- Learning environment
- Fiscal management
- Developing academic programs
- Historic recognition

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase recruitment. enrollment, retention, & employment placement
- Marketing (social media, radio station)
- Creative fundraising
- Guided Pathways
- Partnerships in support of new initiatives
- Growth potential
- Advances in cost-effective Technology
- Bridge and Early College Programs
- Development of new undergraduate program offerings
- Development of Graduate programs
- New leadership
- Renovation & Expansion of facilities
- Increased athletic and extra-mural sports
- Implementation of comprehensive support for First/Second-Year and Students in
- Transition
- Development of full-service Honors College

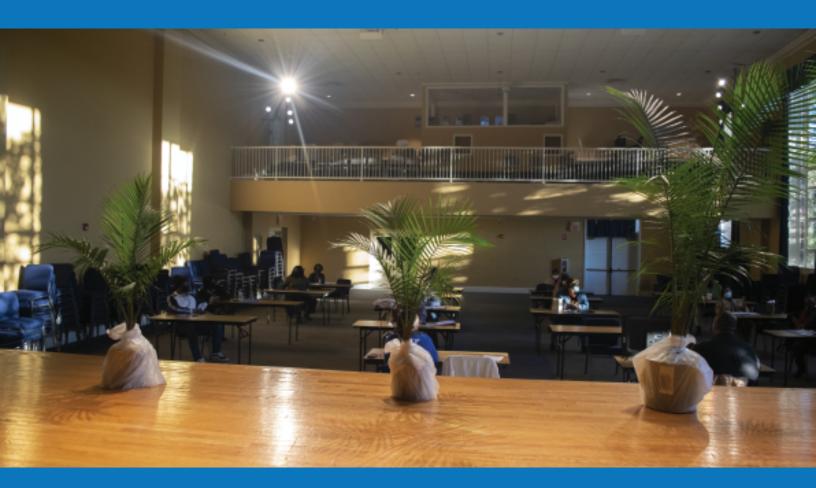
- Low enrollment
- Resources/Fiscal uncertainty
- Development for faculty and staff
- Deferred maintenance (facilities)
- Distinguishing qualities and identity not well known
- Student preparedness at entry
- Ability to hire faculty
- Lack of a robust student activities agenda & extra-mural sports
- Reporting for planning structure
- Aging technological infrastructure
- Territorial organizational structure
- Program offerings
- Comprehensive support for First-Year and Students in Transition
- Full-service Honors College

> THREATS

- Traditional funding (inadequate)
- Leadership Development/faculty and staff
- Competitive market for diverse faculty and staff
- Responsiveness to program and student offering and scheduling demands
- Societal perceptions of education
- Adequate support for diverse learners Lack of knowledge about Voorhees
- College enrollment fluctuations
- Regional and online competition for students
- Decreased family buying power

THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The SWOT analysis above identifies some immediate threats that will cause major damages to the creditworthiness of the institution. If these threats continue without any recourse, they will have a negative impact on achieving the institution's objectives or make them unachievable.



THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The University has appointed its tenth president, and a new direction has been charted for the institution. New additions to the administration, faculty and staff have occurred incrementally, and accountability is being stressed. Increasing enrollment and external funding, focusing on recruitment, retention, graduation, and career placement, are top priorities. All campus facilities are functional, the campus provides a safe learning environment for students, and alumni are being targeted for continued engagement.



OUR CORE BELIEFS

VISION

Voorhees University will be globally recognized as a premier, comprehensive liberal arts institution focused on student success, excellence, integrity, service leadership, diversity, and faith, anchored in the embrace of Beloved Community.

MISSION

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VALUES

Transformation (Innovation): foster and promote transformation and innovation in the design, development, support, delivery, and management of all programs and services.

ntegrity: commit to nurturing campus trust by holding ourselves accountable to the highest standards of professionalism and ethics.

Generativity – committed to establishing, mentoring, guiding, and teaching the next generation via social responsibility and focused leadership.

Excellence/Engagement: establish a culture of engagement and collaboration involving the exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of reciprocity with the citizens and institutions of South Carolina, the nation, and the world.

Resolution/Resolve (tenacity/persistence): emphasize doing our best in teaching and learning, student achievement, administrative practices and delivery of support services in the spirit of excellence and continuous improvement.

Servanthood/Stewardship: remain an affordable institution, recognized for financial sustainability, unparalleled management of human and physical resources, and operational efficiency and effectiveness.



Teaching and Learning: The institution will provide an unsurpassed, student-centered learning experience led by engaged world-class faculty and staff and enhanced by a globally diverse student body.

Inclusion and Equity: The institution will establish a diverse and inclusive learning community that provides equitable opportunities for excellence and achievement for all faculty, professional staff, students, and strategic stakeholders.

Creativity and Innovation: The University will create a unique learning environment that fosters creativity by allowing students to share their ideas about their educational needs.

Outreach and Engagement: The University will establish a culture of engagement and collaboration involving the exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of reciprocity with the citizens and institutions of South Carolina, the nation, and the world.

Resource Stewardship: The University will remain an affordable institution, recognized for financial sustainability, unparalleled management of human and physical resources, and operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Becoming Beloved Community: Anchored in the Episcopal tradition, the University embraces Beloved Community as a development of our campus and community in which all people are cared for, respected, and loved as members of the human race.

THE VOORHEES TRUE BLUE STANDARD

The "True Blue Standard" is our pledge to provide an uncompromising focus upon student success:

- Providing quality degree opportunities and educational experiences which cultivate student excellence in analysis and communications, quantitative literacy, scientific reasoning, global awareness, health consciousness, and personal and career development,
- Providing a liberal arts education that supports specialized academic programs and prepares students for career acquisition, advanced study, lifelong learning, and service in a diverse society,
- Promoting a safe and supportive atmosphere of academic and intellectual freedom with deference to diverse expression in reference to teaching and learning,
- Promoting and nurturing student, faculty, staff, and community interaction in a constructive academic climate that creates opportunities for cultural, intellectual, and personal enrichment and growth for all stakeholders,
- Providing institution-wide student services, activities, and resources that encourage student engagement and achievement as well as complement academic programs,
- Providing students with highly qualified, innovative faculty dedicated to excellence in teaching, scholarly pursuits, service to the community, and continuous improvement of academic programs, and
- Providing an atmosphere of shared responsibility for the success of students and the institution.



OUR NEXT LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE

The Institution exceeds expectations of stakeholders by being innovative in our delivery of services, responsive to the needs of our Beloved Community (faculty; staff; students; business; industry; and society) and guided by a "customer first philosophy."

CORE STRATEGIC GOALS

The Voorhees A.T.L.A.S. to Excellence



Strategic Priority 1: Academic Excellence & Student Success

Provide students the knowledge, insight, abilities, and skills needed to appreciate, contribute to, and lead in a rapidly changing global environment as well as support the production of high-quality scholarship.

How do we level up?

The Institution provides a challenging curriculum led by quality faculty that can be utilized to accelerate and close gaps in the equitable achievement of students' educational and career goals, regardless of their entry into the Institution.

How do we know we have reached the next level?

- 1.1 Innovate to achieve equitable student success.
- 1.2 Promote a culture of integrated learning experiences such as experiential learning, research, internships, apprenticeships, co-ops, performances, and regional and national competitions.
- 1.3 Develop and deliver high quality, agile, and competitive curricula to our talent; individuals of diverse knowledge levels, backgrounds, and ages that are responsive to market demands and the needs of a global society.
- 1.4 Increase engaged student participation in an expanded range and variety of campus experiences and support activities.

Strategic Priority 2: Talent Acquisition

Provide a systemic and strategic approach to identifying, attracting, onboarding, retaining, developing, and engaging talent to meet the needs, goals, and objectives of the institution efficiently and effectively.

How do we level up?

The Institution invests in the future of its people by providing development, advancement, and participatory opportunities to assist each individual with achieving his/her potential.

How do we know we have reached the next level?

- 2.1 Develop a strategic, consistent, flexible, and proactive approach to the recruitment and retention of our team members (faculty, staff, and students).
- 2.2 Identify, hire, motivate, develop, and build a diverse campus community.
- 2.3 Develop a strategy and brand to position Voorhees to attract quality applicants and provide a positive recruiting and onboarding experience (faculty, staff, and students).
- 2.4 Increase educational awareness and access to disproportionately impacted communities (veterans, incarcerated, job Corps, etc.).
- 2.5 Achieve student enrollment that respects our mission and values while positioning Voorhees for fiscal sustainability.
- 2.6 Offer a broad array of choices for instructional format and scheduling, including study-abroad opportunities.

Strategic Priority 3: Leverage & Leadership

Be a leader in innovative practices that sustain our human, technological, environmental, and financial resources that leverage our strengths and identity and embrace areas of growing importance to our mission and excellence.

How do we level up?

Become a nationally recognized Beloved Community and leader in higher education.

How do we know we have reached the next level?

- 3.1 Empower our students, faculty, and staff to become engaged citizens with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable future for communities beyond our campus grounds via research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practices which contribute economic, social, environmental, and educational impact.
- 3.2 Leverage technology for the digital transformation of the Institution and service to society.

Strategic Priority 4: Accountability

Cultivate a culture of excellence that promotes data-driven decision making, best practices, and fiscal responsibility, while empowering employees and students to hold each other accountable in an effort to foster creativity, innovation, personal, and professional growth.

How do we level up?

The Institution develops a translational and transparent method of communication in an effort to guide decision-making.

How do we know we have reached the next level?

- 4.1 Develop a planning process that guides decision-making including divisional goals and strategies aligned with the University's strategic plan.
- 4.2 Engage our students in a technology-augmented living and learning environment that nurtures their well-being, empowers their academic success, and inspires them to be proactive leaders and contributors to society.
- 4.3 Commit to mentoring and support for the success and professional development of faculty and staff to ensure that processes recruiting, hiring, and promotion are inclusive and follow research-based practices for avoiding bias.
- 4.4 Develop strategic and transparent allocations of resources.
- 4.5 Maintain and strengthen the accreditations of the Institution.

Strategic Priority 5: Stability and Sustainability

Enhance collaboration and create structures within and across academic and functional areas to support an organizational culture and operating model that is mission-driven, innovative, adaptable, and committed to fiscal responsibility and responsive to an ever-evolving educational landscape while being conscious of our impact on the local, state, and global environment.

How do we level up?

The Institution has implemented support mechanisms and practices that demonstrate our understanding and commitment to the University's aspirations and goals of providing effective and efficient services with an eye upon the future viability of Voorhees University.

How do we know we have reached the next level?

5.1 Optimize institutional resources to ensure quality and efficiency in all Institutional operations by implementing baseline budgeting focused on strategic initiatives and strengthening programs.

5.2 Increase external support revenue from private sources by engaging alumni, friends, and corporate partners to expand support for the people, places, and programs of the Institution, including a comprehensive capital fundraising campaign.

5.3 Expand funding sources to enhance resources through grants and contracts from federal and state agencies, corporations, and foundations.

5.4 Be good stewards by evaluating and prioritizing deferred building maintenance and renovation as well as technological upkeep and innovations to ensure the Institution does not incur greater costs in the future.

5.5 Build and implement a university-level brand platform that clearly establishes a distinct position for the university among our peers.



UNDERGRADUATE GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES

COMMUNICATION

- Students will be able to apply knowledge of writing processes by using invention, organization, and revision for a given purpose and audience.
- Students will be able to interpret and clearly present information in varied formats, including graphs, charts, and multimedia projects.
- Students will be able to formulate coherent, well-supported oral and written arguments that use language and rhetoric appropriate to the setting, purpose, and audience.
- Students will be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share information for the problem at hand (information literacy).

CRITICAL THINKING

- Students will be able to exercise synthetic, analytic and/or computational reasoning as needed to solve problems.
- Students will be able to logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the subject area.

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

- Students will be able to apply formal and informal qualitative and quantitative analysis effectively to examine processes and means by which individuals make personal, professional, and group decisions.
- Students will be able to formulate empirically testable hypotheses derived from the study of natural and physical sciences.
- Students will be able to apply logical reasoning skills effectively through scientific criticism and argument.
- Students will be able to apply techniques of discovery and critical thinking effectively to solve problems and to evaluate.

QUANTITATIVE REASONING

- Students will be able to use quantitative analytical skills to interpret and evaluate problems.
- Students will be able to apply mathematical concepts effectively to real-world situations.
- Students will be able to interpret and draw inferences from mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables, and schematics.

CULTURAL ANALYSES

- Students will be able to objectify the study of communities and cultures from historical, political, economic, and societal perspectives, to identify how data is collected and analyzed, and to determine how new understandings of social phenomena are achieved and evaluated.
- Students will be able to apply knowledge within the context of how people organize, structure, rationalize, and govern diverse societies from a historical and modern perspective.
- Students will be able to appreciate and evaluate the continued efforts of people, cultures, and societies to explain, translate, and transform their diverse experiences of the world through various mediums.

