

BOLD FORWARD:

*Running Into
Our Calling*



UNG | UNIVERSITY of
NORTH GEORGIA™
THE MILITARY COLLEGE OF GEORGIA®





THE CONTEXT — TODAY’S ENVIRONMENT, THE CHALLENGES, THE OPPORTUNITIES

When arriving at the University of North Georgia, the question I asked myself and others is simply:

What is our job to be done?¹

There are multiple strong indicators to help us answer this question. We are an institution within the University System of Georgia, one of the strongest public university systems in the country. We are a State Leadership Institution, The Military College of Georgia, and one of only six federally designated senior military colleges in the nation. We are a strong provider of workforce talent for Georgia and America. These elements set the foundation for our identity: UNG develops exceptional technically competent leaders of integrity across disciplines, at scale. With this pedigree, our current environment is challenging but creates opportunities. Today, Georgia is experiencing rapid growth. Over the last five years, the state’s population jumped by 4.8%, and over the last 10 years, by 11.2%. This is the fourth-highest state growth in that timeframe, behind Texas, Florida and California.² Coupled with the state’s population growth is its growth in economic development, which includes the formation of the electric vehicle (eV) marketplace, establishment of multiple inland ports leading to creating a global supply chain logistical hub, several manufacturing and technology hubs, the national cyber center of excellence, the global poultry hub, and others.

The nexus of these factors creates the conditions for UNG to step up like never before — but some may ask, why? The answer is simple. UNG is an incredible university, steeped in tradition, with tremendous opportunity, value, and promise. We have something here at UNG that no one else does and we need to deliver

it. Andy Stanley provides one of the most compelling concepts of vision, saying “vision is a picture of a preferred future.”³ Before you can develop this picture, you must be clear about what you stand for.

As I have been meeting the people of UNG — our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and local community members, and asking them: what makes us different? why do our students come to UNG? what are we bringing to our communities? What has emerged is a shared and passionate conviction that we are here to educate people and in doing so, change the trajectory of their lives. Grounded in this foundational belief and flowing from these conversations, a value proposition has crystallized. A vision of how we can elevate our unique attributes, while thriving and leading through the disruption in higher education and getting it right for our students. We need to be agile and disrupt the status quo.

During the recent strategic planning period that accompanied the celebration of UNG’s 150th year, a vision statement was reaffirmed: “to be a regional and national leader for academic excellence, engagement, educational opportunity, and leadership development.”⁴ This vision is the outline and provides us with an overall shape of the picture that is our preferred future. Within these pages, we will fill in the color, the textures, the light, and the depth of that picture. Herein these pages, we describe how **we will boldly run forward into this vision, driven by our calling, to transform the lives of our students and deliver for our region, our state, and the nation.** We will deliver this strategy through excellence, integrity, engagement, and service. Our vision and our work will always reflect one shared value: **Students first. Always.**

1 Christensen, C., et al (2016). *Know Your Customers’ “Jobs to Be Done”*. Harvard Business Review, R1609D-PDF-ENG.

2 U.S. Census Bureau Georgia Quick Facts. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/GA/PST045222>. Accessed September 2023.

3 Stanley, Andy. (2012). *Visioneering: Your Guide for Discovering and Maintaining Personal Vision*. Multnomah.

4 <https://ung.edu/about/mission-vision-values.php>

5 Berlin, Gretchen, et al. (2022). Assessing the lingering impact of COVID-19 on the nursing workforce. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare/our-insights/>

6 Burger, Catherine. (2023). The States with the Largest Nursing Shortages. <https://www.registerednursing.org/articles/largest-nursing-shortages/>

7 Wenk, Amy. *The Race to eVs — The state is a hub for making electric vehicles, but do people want to drive them?* (2023). Atlanta Business Chronicle.

8 Wenk, Amy. *Despite shut-downs, spending in Georgia’s film and TV industry reaches \$4.1 billion.* (2023). Atlanta Business Chronicle.

9 U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/ooi/computer-and-information-technology/information-security-analysts.htm>. Accessed September 2023.

10 EAB Research Strategic Advisory Services. (March 2023). *Undergrad Enrollment Analysis*.

UNG'S CALLING AND EXPECTATION

Before we dive into strategy, we must consider the environment in which we find ourselves.

Georgia is experiencing unprecedented growth which creates needs and opportunities. For example, by 2025 consulting firm McKinsey & Co. estimates the U.S. could experience a shortage of 200,000 to 450,000 nurses available for direct patient care, with Georgia needing approximately 24,000 nurses by 2030.^{5,6} Georgia has lured more than \$25 billion in eV investments over the past five years which equates to about 30,000 jobs and more is on the way.⁷ Georgia continues to explode in the fine arts and entertainment. Current entertainment projects include Gray Television Inc.'s Assembly Studios in Doraville, Electric Owl Studios in DeKalb County, Athena Studios in Athens, BlueStar Studios in Forest Park, as well as ongoing work at Tyler Perry Studios and Trilith Studios.⁸ In the cybersecurity space, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports cyber jobs, including information security analysts, will grow by 32% by 2032, equating to more than 168,000 jobs.⁹ Each of these workforce needs create expectations for the University of North Georgia — the expectation to deliver the workforce needed for our region, the state and the nation.

Nationally, American higher education is facing one of its most pivotal moments in history. Today, we see a combination of forces which together serve as a significant threat to the viability of the American university. First, there will be a 12% demographic decline in the number of 18-year-olds between 2025-2030¹⁰, meaning that there are fewer college-going students starting in 2025. Second, the college non-consumer market is growing at an unprecedented rate. Although the national high school graduation rate is growing by 7.2%, the college enrollment rate is dropping by 5.6%. The result is that 32% of 18-to 24-year-olds who graduate from high school don't enroll in college (across all educational sectors)¹¹.

These data tell us that we must strategically focus on college consumption by ensuring we deliver a message of the hope and optimism afforded by the timeless experiences of a University of North Georgia education coupled with the increase in generational value afforded by a UNG degree. Our approach must include attacking college non-consumption with a clear and robust message — a college degree is a life-changing, value-adding deal. In fact, based on current University System of Georgia data, it is a million-dollar deal: "The work-life earnings of



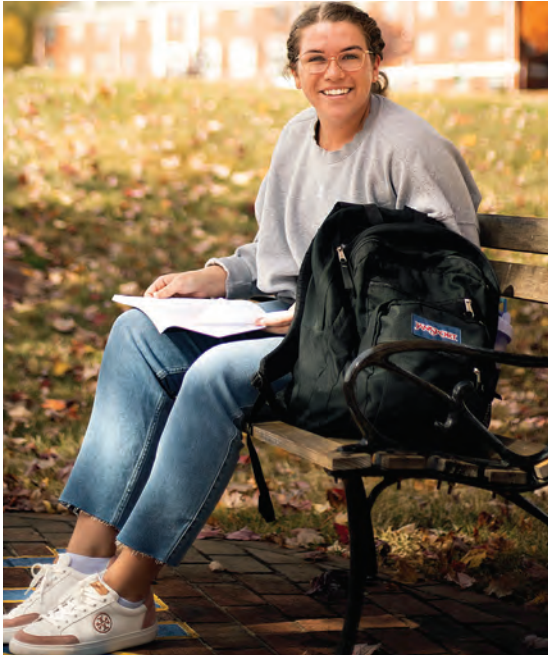
Georgians with a bachelor's degree will be \$1,152,000 more than for those with a high school diploma (which is an 82% boost in work-life earnings for high school graduates who earn a bachelor's degree)."¹² Strategically, we need to realize that the biggest competition we face is not another institution, but rather these dynamics. Moreover, if higher education continues to focus only on the traditional, in-person, residential four-year experience, it faces difficult times and may even become obsolete.

Within this landscape of higher education dynamics, a university's value proposition is based on three fundamental questions that mirror those we have been discussing within our communities: what is different about this university? why would a student want to attend this university? if this university disappeared, would the community be changed? In answering these questions, we understand the job to be done and can lead in the areas that make us unique while also providing students what they are seeking — transformative experiences which take the classroom and bring it to life.

Critical to this calling is the fundamental question — how do we contribute to these expectations programmatically on our five campuses? Ultimately, as we develop this strategy, we must answer the question — what is the job to be done by each of our campuses? This is a key question we will answer over the coming months and ensure the answer fuels our strategy.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Lifetime Earnings for University System of Georgia Class of 2022. (June 2023). *A Study Commissioned by the University System of Georgia*. Selig Center for Economic Growth. Terry College of Business. University of Georgia.



There is not a university better positioned to face these challenges and answer these questions with a differentiated student education that is meeting our regional economic needs as well as national security needs than the University of North Georgia. UNG has it all — an unparalleled regional and national brand, value in its academic programs, a vibrant multi-campus construct, an endorsement as a State Leadership Institution, and the honor of being one of six senior military colleges. These attributes equate to UNG being positioned to offer a differentiated educational experience that will draw students into higher education. The result will be developing and delivering leaders needed for our workforce on a regional, state, and national level to fuel our economies and make America better. Through this missional work, we have the opportunity to not just change, but define, what the future of higher education will look like. The moment is now for the University of North Georgia to redefine the American university — to innovate and disrupt and ultimately deliver the picture of a preferred future. The picture we see is this — the University of North Georgia will become the most innovative, dynamic, legacy-making university in America.



PRINCIPALLY DIFFERENTIATE: MAKING STRATEGIC BIG BETS

Our challenge and opportunity are to elevate the unique value proposition of UNG while leading through the disruption within higher education and setting the stage to ultimately thrive in this environment. UNG is uniquely positioned to be transformative in seven key strategic areas in which we already have a firm foothold but need laser focus, clear direction, and fueled acceleration. In this framework, relevance is critical. These seven areas are worth prioritizing because they are incredibly relevant and position us for greater demand in the future given the dynamics of higher education hyper competition and declining public perception of value. Hence, we need to make some strategic big bets to be disruptive and innovate like never before. These are called “bets” for a reason. When you bet, you are taking a risk. Although there is risk, we can also be confident that: (1) the hand we are holding is better and stronger than that of our competitors, and (2) we will win. Our strategic bets are founded in the economic needs of our region, our state, and the nation. To be transformative, we must take some risk. We believe if we take disruptive action, we will win.

These strategic big bets emerge from our bedrock value that our **students come first — always**. They are then built on our existing and emerging strengths and are coupled with the opportunities and expectations which lie ahead. So, today, we are making seven strategic big bets to principally differentiate the University of North Georgia and position us to deliver:

DESIGN AND BUILD A LEADERSHIP FOUNDRY

UNG is designated as a state leadership institution by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia — a designation we need to supercharge for our students, staff, and faculty. Leaders are made, not born. Like a “foundry”, where precious metals are transformed within a crucible, our leadership foundry will transform our students through the crucible of a leadership journey. Developing students into leaders doesn’t happen in a single course, it happens over time through experience and perspective. Existing UNG programs such as Ascend and our Corps of Cadets forge within these students the ability to foster self-awareness, develop agency, build resiliency, grow character, and expand self-reflection. Within our leadership foundry, these elements will be combined with timeless values and co-curricular leadership development opportunities to create an environment across all five campuses in which all of our students can develop into the best version of themselves. Our foundry will ensure that every one of our students, on every campus, has access to a signature leadership development experience while at UNG. Similarly, to develop our students as leaders, we will bring this leadership mindset to faculty and staff development — providing integrated and cohesive programs for those serving, teaching, and mentoring our students to be leaders within our communities and in their own lives.



ACCELERATE THE FINE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Georgia’s entertainment industry has experienced unprecedented growth in recent years. In addition to film, Georgia is seeing growth in sound, game design and virtual entertainment. UNG provides students with hands-on experience in each of these areas to include all aspects of film production. A strong collaborative approach across disciplines with a focus on storytelling in all of its forms, gives students the opportunity to create interdisciplinary teams that mirror work in the industry and promote innovation. These programs are complemented by nationally accredited programs in graphic design, digital arts, game studies, and studio art, as well as robust programs in music. Our state-of-the-art facilities located at the Gainesville Campus (in easy proximity to Atlanta) and our world-class faculty who are active practitioners and creative artists, establish the optimal conditions for our success. With these assets, we will accelerate the positioning of our fine arts and entertainment programs to provide our students internships, project-based learning and industry experience that lead to high-impact jobs in Georgia’s exploding fine arts and entertainment industries.





SUPERCHARGE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We face critical shortages of healthcare workers, teachers, business leaders, and agricultural leaders in Georgia. The data show these workforce needs will continue to increase. We need to rethink and supercharge how we deliver these academic programs, including accelerated paths, competency-based approaches, and innovative delivery of degree requirements, such as online options. UNG has one of the largest dual enrollment programs in the state, growing articulations with technical colleges, and prior learning assessment practices that are being deployed to increase student pipelines. Embedded professional credentials and work-based competencies such as the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification in criminal justice and working with cutting-edge industry software in supply chain logistics, provide our graduates with a distinct advantage in their first job. We will leverage partnerships with employers — school systems, healthcare providers, and regional businesses — and offer our students extensive clinical and classroom experience, paid internships, and alignment with our partners' onboarding programs to accelerate their path to becoming productive employees. These disruptive models will be leveraged and intensified to effectively deliver opportunities for our students across all UNG colleges.

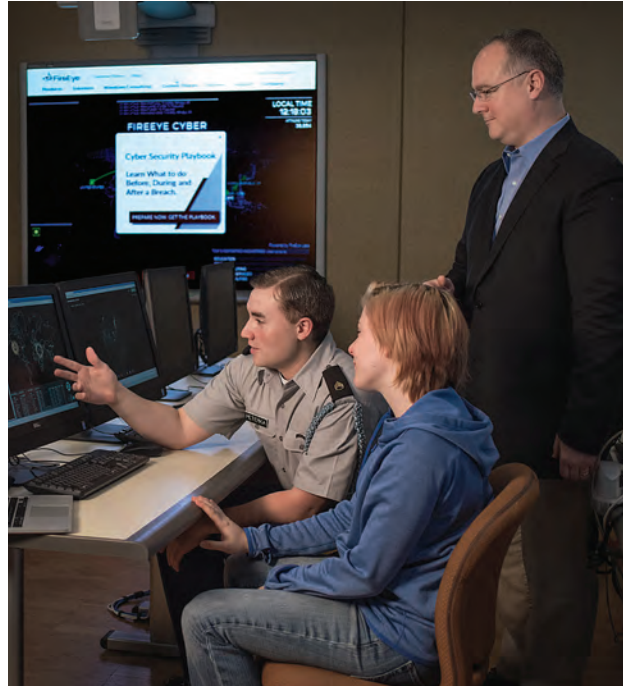


EXPAND THE STEM VALUE PROPOSITION

In today's rapidly growing economy, northeast Georgia needs college graduates who have a strong foundation in science, who can integrate information across disciplines, and who are critical thinkers and problem-solvers. The ongoing and unprecedented need is for a skilled workforce that possesses the ability to couple the STEM (science, technology, math, and engineering) fields with analytical and problem-solving skills. UNG's interdisciplinary pedagogical approach in STEM and emphasis on undergraduate research, teaches students to integrate chemistry, physics and biology and apply them to research questions. Similarly, UNG's Lewis F. Rogers Institute for Geospatial Analysis, recognized as a National Geospatial Technology Center of Excellence, teaches students to apply geospatial analysis to diverse data sets to answer research questions and solve problems. With a strong reputation for preparing students for graduate school and medical school, we are well positioned to expand our value proposition. We will do this by differentiating and delivering programs in response to state and regional needs for interdisciplinary expertise in STEM, curated pedagogy, and innovation in these fields.

GET IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY GAME

We live in a complex world with numerous threats to U.S. national security. The University of North Georgia has a long tradition of strengthening America by delivering functional experts who are leaders in multiple domains. In addition to being one of six senior military colleges, UNG offers degrees in cybersecurity, computer science, strategic languages, criminal justice, international affairs, public administration, security and strategic studies, logistics, and spatial data and information science at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Concentrations, minors, and certificates create further opportunities for students to develop interdisciplinary expertise that can be enhanced by intensive study abroad experiences. We will get in the national security game by positioning these programs to provide students a high-impact and modular experience where they can curate a mix of academic credentials that are relevant within the current national security environment. With significant expertise in national security across a variety of disciplines, UNG is uniquely positioned to become a critical player in the national security conversation and deliver like never before. This work will develop our students to be highly adaptable and agile in order to address the complexity of today's dynamic threat environment.



DELIVER THE CORPS OF THE FUTURE

Throughout its storied history, our Corps of Cadets has been a robust, relevant, world-class immersive leader development program graduating leaders of character for the Total Army, public and private entities, and civic organizations for the good of our Nation, and the state and communities they serve. The Corps of the Future is destined to leap ahead of our Senior Military College peers and position us to compete for the most talented scholar-athlete-leader, patriotic young Americans. Our strategy will include increasing the size of the Corps of Cadets and delivering leaders who make a greater impact. Through our work, we will attract, recruit, educate, and graduate these new leaders to the highest standards — morally and ethically principled leaders who will lead in America's communities and across society. Through this work, we will create and launch the Cadet Leadership Academy, grow the Corps of Cadets to 1,000 cadets, reorganize to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness, advance our cadets to elite total performance through a cutting edge, holistic health and fitness program, build ultra-modern infrastructure, and reset our economy to deliver the Corps of the Future. Our legacy of leadership has been — and will continue to be—measured by the contributions our leaders make in the military and in all walks of American society. This is our calling and America is expecting us to deliver like never before.





BUILD THE MOST COMPETITIVE, VALUE-ADDED DIVISION II ATHLETICS PROGRAM IN THE NATION

UNG athletics has a storied tradition of success in competition, the classroom, and our communities. Leveraging this tradition of excellence, we will build the most competitive, value-added DII athletics program in the nation. This strategy will include recruiting and competing with a championship mindset. We will also reset our athletics program economy to be innovative, forward-thinking and focused on unique revenue-generating opportunities. Our high-performance business strategy will remain centered on providing a best-in-class student-athlete and fan experience, in addition to providing a competitive advantage on the playing field. As we do this work, we will lean into our unique value proposition and exploit our position as a senior military college to develop a never-before-seen elite performance program. We have an unprecedented opportunity to curate an elite performance program that lies at the nexus of our elite student-athletes, our elite warriors within our Corps of Cadets, and our nationally recognized health sciences programs. Our outcome will be an elite athletics program that is a high performing and nationally recognized standard of excellence.

Immersed in each of our strategic big bets is delivering impactful, focused, and accountable student engagement and success. Our strategic big bets will rally the entire university community to create a more compelling, vibrant, and curated student experience. Students need to be engaged and excited by a 24- to 60-month transformative experience that is high-impact, co-curricular, accessible, and outcomes-based. The experience must be challenging but also fun, relevant, and responsive to the cries of this generation. It needs to leverage the attributes of college that make it special — academics, discovery, leadership, place, athletics, internships, entrepreneurship, relationships, and opportunity — across the uniqueness of our five campuses. It needs to orchestrate memories and experiences that last a lifetime. Ultimately, the student experience must ensure the very best of the higher education value proposition — changing the trajectory of the lives of our students, their family trees, and our communities.

We can deliver this higher education value proposition by integrating student pipelines with pathways to careers. For any university, the local community and region are critical to the success of the institution, and the institution needs to be critical to the success of the local community and the region. UNG is fortunate to be anchored in five distinct, thriving, special communities that welcome us, value us, and need us. We will partner with our communities to strengthen these dependencies, develop local industries, build community, and therefore, support the quality of life of our entire region. Together, we will create shared pipelines in which the institution and our local communities

work hand-in-hand to improve access, outcomes and stimulate economic competitiveness. UNG will create value through stimulating jobs, improving workforce retention, spawning small business, and creating the conditions for entrepreneurship.

As we approach our strategic big bets, we need to ensure we bring innovation, agility, and ultimately value to the delivery of each bet. Therefore, we will be disruptive by developing strategies that bring the most forward-leaning thought to bear. As an example, within each of our seven strategic big bets, we will deliberately integrate artificial intelligence, large language models, and machine learning. This will allow us to provide our students with the tools needed to compete in the workplace and allow us to elevate our value proposition. In the end, we will offer our students an incredibly transformative experience and set a standard for continual innovation, both in our pedagogy and our scholarship.

As we create our objectives and develop our planning around our seven strategic big bets, data will drive our strategy, our decision-making, and ensure we are delivering. Therefore, we will curate, adopt, and fuel a data-driven approach to goal setting, and responsible stewardship of resources. As we make these resource investments, we will focus on outcomes and accountability — did we get where we planned and if not, why not? What does the data tell us that we need to adjust, refocus, or reengineer in our work to meet the next goal? Are we delivering? We will be held accountable.



NEXT STEPS — OUR CALLING

The work of our seven strategic big bets spans widely across our departments and campuses. There is a place for everyone on our team to be involved in this work. Shortly, we will begin forming numerous working groups to support each of our seven strategic big bets. The working groups will be charged to develop a road map and plan of action during this academic year (AY 24) to be realized over the next four years (AY 25-28). These plans will have two- and four-year goals, milestones, and outcomes. We will move with action, we will hold ourselves accountable, and we will deliver.

Remember, our strategy is grounded in our shared value — **our students come first — always**. The college years are uniquely formative. Universities should create experiences that cultivate curiosity, unlock in every student what they don't know about themselves, and help every student determine the best version of themselves. This is our calling — the time is now. We are in our moment — this is the time to be transformative and deliver at scale. Our seven strategic big bets provide the opportunity in which we will remain relevant, plant our flag, boldly move forward, and run into our calling. The University of North Georgia has the necessary ingredients, the people, and the calling to create this picture of our preferred future — **the most innovative, dynamic, legacy-making university in America**. Let us boldly run and deliver like never before!

Mike Shannon
President

October 2, 2023

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