STRATEGIC PLAN
2016-2021
The University of Opportunity and Success

Refresh endorsed by Council: 11 August 2020
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung of the Kulin who are the traditional owners of University land. As we share our own knowledge practices within the University may we pay respect to the deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal community and their ownership of Country. We acknowledge that the land on which we meet is a place of age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal and that the Kulin people’s living culture has a unique role in the life of this region.
The 2016-2020 Strategic Plan was launched on the 27 May 2016 with a strategy comprising three key elements:

1. Position ourselves as an open and excellent university
2. Pursue a transformational agenda
3. Ensure financial sustainability.

The past four years has been an exciting time for VU. When we launched the Strategic Plan in 2016 we were emerging from a time of significant change for the sector and challenge for the University.

At that time, we identified the need to focus on a transformational agenda to position ourselves as an open and excellent university – providing high quality tertiary education to any student from any background. We understood the need to be able to continuously anticipate, account for and flexibly respond to the rapidly changing world in which we operate. More so, we could see the need to secure our long term sustainability in an increasingly competitive market.

Our transformation, towards becoming an agile, dynamic, innovative and growing University of Opportunity and Success, has touched all aspects of our organisation. The development of The VU Way, our approach to engaged learning in block mode, has been the centrepiece to this transformation. We are also now in the midst of reshaping our physical presence across the west of Melbourne, reimagining the student experience, reinventing our operating model and refreshing our enabling capability. We have, through the hard work of all staff, delivered a significant financial turnaround and as a consequence, have great optimism about the future sustainability of the University.

We want VU to be a great place to learn, a great place to work and do great things within our community.

However, our transformation still continues at pace but we are now operating in very different conditions. In reviewing our performance against plan and with a desire to keep the momentum of the reform going, University Council asked management to review the current plan and extend it to 2021. In undertaking this refresh, we have accounted for the significant risks and opportunities presented by the current COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to commit to strategy in action, to account for the changing conditions. This refreshed Strategic Plan incorporates some of the key actions since it was originally released including The White Paper, which detailed the second element of our strategy, our transformational agenda.
The White Paper articulated four Big Ideas which underpinned our transformation:

• Our Moral Purpose: Transforming Lives and Transforming Communities
• Reconceptualising Tertiary Education: A University Without Boundaries
• Developing 21st Century Skills and Confronting 21st Century Challenges
• Agility, Productivity and Growth: An Agile, Dynamic, Innovative and Growing University

In particular, our Moral Purpose which builds upon our long history of education and training in the West is privileged in this refreshed plan. It also has shaped the development of a new set of organisational values, another major new addition.

Over the short term we will continue to be bold as we implement The VU Way, our new way to do uni, and remain unwavering in our commitment to ensuring learner success. The work we have done so far is already having a marked impact on student transition, satisfaction, retention and success. This student success ensures VU’s success, as we grow our reputation and brand as an open and excellent university.

We also have more work to do in refreshing our academic and research programs. We are conscious of the need to more closely connect knowledge and skills by finding and fostering deeper synergies between vocational and higher education and between our research and our teaching. This will ensure our graduates are exposed to world-leading ideas and practical learning experiences that prepare them for their future; in their work and in their communities.

As we continue to reshape our education and research we are also transforming our campuses in terms of both our physical footprint and the quality of infrastructure to support world class learning and research. In the process of doing this, we are initiating a whole of University commitment to Planetary Health and consolidating our presence to a powerful network of precincts from the western edge of the CBD through to Footscray, Sunshine/St Albans and Werribee with satellite presences aligned to local industry and community education and training needs.

This document, then, extends our focus beyond 2020 to the end of 2021 and provides an updated view of our transformation in action. As a strategy, it will help us continue to prioritise and focus our efforts and resources to deliver on a change agenda that is reshaping our very understanding of what is possible in tertiary education in Australia. While doing that we remain committed to a
SETTING THE SCENE
FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

Focussed, institution-wide effort on:

• Student Experience and Outcomes
  o enhancing the quality of the student experience and outcomes, with an emphasis on career preparedness and development, employability and entrepreneurship, and leadership capability for a global context
  o designing fit-for-purpose pathways, opening up opportunities for students from all backgrounds to engage successfully with further learning
  o delivering targeted student support to maximise student persistence and success
  o engaging students through technology-enhanced blended learning and flexible access to learning opportunities that are tailored to meet student and industry needs.

• Research and Engagement
  o driving an innovative applied and translational research agenda and strong engagement with industry and community with a particular focus on flagship areas of strength that also reinforce the quality of learning and teaching

• Capability Development
  o building core capability across VU through investment in our staff, our systems and our processes
  o shaping a consolidated and enhanced campus footprint that reflects VU’s deep engagement with the West of Melbourne, while simultaneously incorporating the best of physical and virtual learning spaces to engage students in the West of Melbourne and beyond.

In the original plan we articulated three overlapping phases to our strategy implementation. COVID-19 has required us to adjust this slightly, introducing a fourth phase focused on dealing with the institutional shocks arising from the pandemic, underpinned by continued innovation and productivity gains.

The extension of this current Strategic Plan will enable an extensive consultation process to occur so a new Plan can be developed to commence in 2022 to continue VU’s next stage of growth.

Peter Dawkins
Vice-Chancellor and President

August 2020
OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Whilst we remain committed to the institutional priorities in this Strategic Plan refresh and our significant transformational agenda, these may require readjustment and realignment to take account of the significantly changed operating environment.

To this end, in May 2020, Council endorsed the COVID-19 Mitigation and Recovery Strategy and Plan (the Ten Point Plan). This Strategy is a partnership between management and staff as well as our key stakeholders, especially across the West of Melbourne, with a central focus on maintaining our ambition of transforming the lives of students and communities. It also serves as a bridging document between our Strategic Plan, 2016-2021 and the University’s operational plan.

To be successful in this environment we will need to continue to be bold and innovative but also agile and flexible, able to adapt as conditions change.

To position ourselves as an open and excellent university through the pursuit of a transformational agenda and ensure financial sustainability.

In approaching the challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the University will stay true to its Moral Purpose and Values – to be always WEST.

2020: COVID-19 Mitigation and Recovery Plan – The Ten Point Plan
2021: University Operational Plan
OUR MORAL PURPOSE: VISION AND MISSION

Victoria University has a moral purpose to transform the lives of any student from any background and to transform our communities, in partnership with our students and communities. Our Vision and Mission capture this intent.

VISION
As the University of Opportunity and Success, we will be open and excellent, creating exceptional value for any student from any background and uplifting the communities in which we operate.

MISSION
We will achieve this vision by:

- **Education**
  Providing high quality, engaging career-based tertiary education at all levels of vocational and higher education with flexible entry and exit points, appropriate pathways, engaging and rigorous curriculum and contemporary delivery; while maintaining rigorous standards and ensuring that all students are supported to meet those standards.

- **Research & Engagement**
  Undertaking high quality and innovative applied and translational research which results in healthier, smarter and sustainable communities in the West of Melbourne and beyond, and connecting deeply with industry and the community, in turn enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.
OUR VALUES

Our moral purpose is at the core of our values.
Our moral purpose is to transform the lives of any student from any background and to transform our communities, in partnership with our students and communities.
We do this particularly, but not only, in the West of Melbourne.

VU is ALWAYS

Welcoming

We...• believe everyone deserves the chance to thrive;
• are inclusive, supportive and respectful;
• provide lifelong learning opportunities;
• appreciate the contribution that each person brings; and
• are proud to be part of the West of Melbourne.

Ethical

We...• respect identity and culture;
• are fair and unbiased in the decisions we make;
• communicate openly and honestly;
• take responsibility for keeping people safe and well; and
• are conscious of the impact we make, locally and globally.

Shaping the Future

We...• continually and boldly challenge the status quo;
• encourage critical enquiry and creative thinking;
• know how to adapt to achieve our goals;
• grow and pursue improvement and excellence in everything we do; and
• empower ourselves to build a better future.

Together

We...• work collaboratively to generate solutions;
• share our knowledge so that others can grow;
• build lifelong connections with our students and partners;
• work closely with industry to produce job-ready graduates; and
• engage with communities to make a real difference.
OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

FOR OUR STUDENTS, STAFF AND THE COMMUNITY

VU aims to be a great university of the 21st century by being inclusive rather than exclusive. Through our unique, *The VU Way*, we provide exceptional value to our diverse community of students, guiding them to achieve their career aspirations through engaging, personalised, flexible, well-supported, technology enhanced and industry relevant learning opportunities. Our students and graduates will be future ready – for work, technology and life – and their achievements will be demonstrated by their employability and entrepreneurship.

Our staff are dedicated to guiding the career success of our students, innovative and effective in their approach, leaders in their disciplines and areas of practice, engaged with industry and community and committed to continuous improvement in a rapidly changing world. We support our academic and professional staff to develop our students’ careers, connect with industry and community, and engage in research with impact. Our *People Strategy* is about working together to make VU an even better place to work, creating an employee experience that is as progressive, inclusive and engaging as our student experience and where exceptional performance will be rewarded.

The applied and translational research conducted by our staff and students within our two interdisciplinary areas of focus, *Health, Sport and Active Living* and *Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities* will enhance social and economic outcomes in our heartland communities of the West of Melbourne and beyond. Our graduates as employees and citizens are shaping the industries in which they work and communities where they live. Healthier, smarter and more sustainable communities will result. The aspiration is to promote planetary health.
OUR FOUR BIG IDEAS

In *The White Paper* (2017) we articulated four big ideas that shaped our strategy and consequent, transformation agenda.

**BIG IDEA 1:**
- **Our Moral Purpose: Transforming Lives and Transforming Communities**
  We are a university with heart. Focused on the success of our students and the health and wellbeing of the industries and communities of the west of Melbourne and beyond.

**BIG IDEA 2:**
- **Reconceptualising Tertiary Education: A University Without Boundaries**
  We are committed to supporting any student from any background, take an integrated view of tertiary education, embrace cultural diversity and forge deep connections with industry and community.

**BIG IDEA 3**
- **Developing 21st Century Skills and Confronting 21st Century Challenges**
  We will help students, industries and communities to thrive within an increasingly disruptive world. We will champion interdisciplinary approaches to the complex challenges of our time.

**BIG IDEA 4**
- **Agility, Productivity and Growth: An Agile, Dynamic, Innovative and Growing University**
  We will be agile, dynamic and innovative in our approach. We will ensure that our campuses, our technologies, our products and our operating model are fit for the modern world. VU will be a great place to work.

*NOTE:* In the original version of the Strategic Plan, 2016-2020 we articulated 7 design aspirations. These have now evolved into the four big ideas and can easily be aggregated under each of these.
As we stand on the brink of the next decade, one that is critical to the future of the industries and communities of the west of Melbourne and beyond, VU continues to strive towards becoming a great university of the 21st Century. Our Strategy is focussed on continuously transforming to keep pace with the disruptive change that is framing our operating reality and is underpinned by three key elements:

1. Position ourselves as an open and excellent university
2. Pursue a transformational agenda
3. Ensure financial sustainability.

Within the three elements, and guided by our four Big Ideas, we have five priority programs of work:

1. The VU Way
2. Academic and Research Programs of the Future
4. Making VU a Great Place to Work.
5. Organisational and Financial Sustainability.

As we pursue these five priority programs, we will stay future-focussed and continue to fine-tune our approach to make sure that we are thinking and behaving strategically in all that we do. This will ensure that we build on the bold moves we have taken as part of our transformation thus far by leading and shaping the future of tertiary education rather than having it created for us. In continuing this trajectory over the next two years, we will be firming the foundations for accelerated growth towards 2030.
ELEMENT 1: Position Ourselves as an Open and Excellent University
Refreshed Priorities

Our Priorities in 2016

- Tertiary education at all levels from pre-vocational certificates to PhDs with flexible entry and exit points and seamless pathways
- A standards-based approach with personalised support for students at all levels
- A contemporary vocational education offer, focussed on developing the skills and competencies required in a rapidly transitioning economy
- Clear transition and pathway opportunities for students not yet prepared for the academic requirements of undergraduate study
- Creation of a VU Academy for high achieving students
- Research with impact, delivering productive outcomes to industry and community and enhancing teaching and learning especially in flagship areas.

Our Progress Towards being an Open and Excellent University

- Reinvention of our TAFE offering as Victoria University Polytechnic with a recognised, world-leading blended learning approach
- Creation of the cross-university school, School for the Visitor Economy, as an exemplar of seamless integration of VET and HE
- Introduction of the Block Model as core to The VU Way with real impact on student retention and success
- Establishment of the Student Advising for Success program
- Launch of the VU Academy for Social Change and Leadership to enable students to develop leadership skills while making a positive impact on society and environment
- Continued strong performance in international rankings
- Activation of the VU Research Plan, 2017-2020 through the creation of VU Research and a focusing of our efforts and resources on our areas of strength.

Our Focus to 2021

- Continue the implementation of The VU Way, with all undergraduate completed and commencement of postgraduate and vocational education courses
- Develop a Digital Education and Transition Strategy including an implementation plan for remote readiness via Digitally Supported Remote Learning
- Position VU Polytechnic as an agile and strong skills training provider with a consolidated and high quality digitised offer including a focus on growing the top performing courses.
- Continue to leverage The VU Way and promoting new ways of doing Uni, including maximising our dual-sector status, to drive student retention and student success
- Develop 2021-2023 Student Retention Strategy and 2021-2023 Employability Strategy
- Continue implementation of the Rankings and Reputation Strategy, in particular to strengthen impact rankings
- Continue to develop our mission-aligned research with a refresh of the Research Strategy, including targeted support of Planetary Health research and ensure VU Research is fit-for-purpose.
ELEMENT 2:
Pursue a Transformational Agenda
Refreshed Priorities

Our Priorities in 2016

- Enhancing the quality and outcomes of the student experience to support their successful careers as employees and entrepreneurs, through contemporary career-based vocational and higher education at all levels
- Student attraction strategies that target different student segments and deliver growth opportunities
- Applied and translational research and industry and community engagement that has measurable impact, especially in Sport Health and Active Living and Sustainable, Liveable, Creative, Smart Cities
- Building the underpinning capabilities: leadership, human resources and hard infrastructure required to deliver a flexible, personalised, value-adding experience to students, industry and community
- Enhancing the competitiveness of our current higher education and vocational education courses
- Testing new markets, new business models and new partnerships.

Our Progress on our Transformational Agenda

- Reinvention of our TAFE offering as Victoria University Polytechnic with recognised, world-leading online learning
- Introduction of The VU Way as the model through which we deliver engaged learning and create flexibility for our students
- Initiation of the Sport Strategy, VU’s first flagship, with the aim of becoming the number one Australian university in this field by 2030
- Development of the Health, Sport and Active Living and the Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities strategies to bring a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing the key challenges facing the communities of the west of Melbourne
- Rationalisation of the campus footprint, moving from campuses to precincts (City West, Footscray, Sunshine/St Albans and Werribee) and commencement of major infrastructure developments
- Launch of key transformation initiatives including VU Innovations, VU Online, VU Research, Bathelmun Yalingwa, focus on Cultural Diversity
- Commencement of the reimagining of VU’s approach to engaging with industry, government and the wider community.

Our Focus to 2021

- Continue the implementation of The VU Way, with all undergraduate completed and commencement of postgraduate and vocational education courses
- Leverage the work done so far on our academic programs of the future and continue to identify new and emerging opportunities for both HE and VET
- Revise our domestic Student Recruitment Strategy and our International Student Strategy, leveraging the flexibility of VU’s offer including Digitally Supported Remote Delivery in Block and accessible admission settings
- Focus on delivery of a product mix that will ensure a smooth and viable transition to the new City West precinct in the CBD
- Develop Planetary Health as a whole-of-university commitment, especially finding place-based solutions
- Implement Health, Sport and Active Living and the Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities strategies
- Develop additional cross-university programs and schools starting with the School for Transport Systems and Civic Infrastructure
- Refresh the Campus Master Plan, and deliver a Precinct Strategy that includes the transition from campuses to precincts in Werribee, Sunshine/St Albans and Footscray
- Develop a West of Melbourne Strategy, that continues to focus and nurture our connection with the West, in particular playing a major role in post-COVID-19 recovery
- Recommit to and adapt the People Strategy, including continuing our compact with staff, underpinned by our Moral Purpose and VU Values, working together on VU’s recovery.
ELEMENT 3:
Ensure Financial Sustainability
Refreshed Priorities

### Our Priorities in 2016
- Increasing productivity by efficient use of resources underpinned and enabled by systems and processes that support this
- Delivering revenue growth by raising tertiary education participation in the west of Melbourne, exploring new markets and models beyond our traditional region, including internationally and strengthening our capacity to attract research funding in areas of strength
- Decreasing costs through workload improvements, better understanding of course and unit delivery costs and a reshaped campus footprint
- An ongoing commitment across the organisation to ensure strong financial management.

### Our Progress to Financial Sustainability
- Leveraging the introduction of the Block Model to assist with reshaping workforce productivity and to grow successful tertiary participation in the west of Melbourne
- Rationalisation of the campus footprint through asset sales and gaining approvals for future sales
- Implementation of a unit and course costing model to assist with decision-making about what to offer and what to retire
- Implementation of VU Research to focus on our resources effectively in research areas of strength.
- Endorsement of the VET and HE EAs.
- Return to a surplus budget in 2018 and 2019.

### Our Focus to 2021
- Ensure financial sustainability, post-COVID-19, through a number of targeted financial mitigation actions relating to workforce, CAPEX and OPEX savings, expenditure restraint and liquidity
- Ensure regulatory compliance through securing re-registration as a higher education and CRICOS provider, preparing for an ASQA re-registration and committing to a program of continuous improvement of VU’s compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework
- Complete the implementation of the Block, including Digitally Supported Remote Delivery, to ensure that student retention and success translates to financial stability
- Uplift TAFE revenue through a consolidated course offer, predominantly digitised and aligned to strengthened pathways within and between VET and HE
- Ensure that key transformation initiatives such as VU Innovations, VU Research and VU Online continue to foster innovation and generate profitable revenue
- Develop and action a growth and productivity plan as well as a sustainability plan
- Develop and implement a recruitment strategy to ensure that load, revenue and margin targets associated with new infrastructure investments (especially in the City West precinct) are met, or exceeded
- Develop and enhance our risk management and planning capability.
To ensure that we continue to leverage our transformation into productivity and growth, we must remain focussed in our endeavours. To do this we will continuously measure the success of our priority programs and initiatives against our strategy, the Big Ideas expressed in *The White Paper* and underpinning principles of *The VU Way*. In a matrixed view, we will regularly stress-test and report, through our annual planning process.

### OUR STRATEGY

1. Position ourselves as an open and excellent university
2. Pursue a transformational agenda
3. Ensure financial sustainability

### THE BIG IDEAS

1. Our Moral Purpose
2. Reconceptualise Tertiary Education
3. 21st Century Skills and Challenges
4. Agility, Productivity and Growth

### THE VU WAY

1. Engaged learning
2. Flexibility
3. Future Ready Graduates
4. Student Experience

We will also continue to track and measure the success of the whole program of work and focus against the following twelve high-level KPIs.

### STUDENTS AND RESEARCH

1. Student load (by market segment)
2. Proportion of VE and HE student share for West of Melbourne LGAs
3. Student satisfaction with teaching and training
4. Student retention for VE, Undergraduate HE and HDR
5. Proportion of VTAC 1–3 preferences
6. Research income and publications

### BRAND, OPERATION AND STAFF

1. Brand health and reputation
2. Staff engagement
3. Revenue
4. Operating margin for reinvestment (OMR)
5. Labour productivity (measured by ratio of total revenue to staff costs)
6. Capital productivity.
FOCUS ON ENABLERS

- **Our Staff:** Making VU a great place to work by cultivating a highly engaged and strong workforce while fostering a unique, authentic and healthy workplace culture.
- **Our Campuses:** Moving from campuses to precincts, aligned to government priority areas, at Footscray, Sunshine and Werribee with a strong presence at the western end of the CBD.
- **Our Digital Technologies:** Creating boundary-less campuses through the use of best of breed digital infrastructure and the accelerating adoption of new and emerging technologies.
- **Our Partnerships:** Seeking and strengthening relationships with industry, government and community based on - inclusion and diversity; collaboration and shared purpose; transparency and trust; impact and action; and sustained engagement and participatory trust.
- **Our Operating Model:** Encouraging cross-University collaboration to ensure a close relationship between core teaching and learning operations, research and engagement.
- **Our Ecosystem:** Making decisions and taking action informed by the reality that we are part of a broader ecosystem; connected with the community and industry, locally and globally.
KEY CAPABILITIES AND FOUR PHASES

OUR CAPABILITIES

We will develop the capabilities of our staff to:

- **Deliver Excellence**: Results-driven, accountability, problem solving focus.
- **Engage**: Customer service mind-set internally, externally and particularly for students.
- **Collaborate and Partner**: Build successful relationships, communicate effectively, influence and negotiate.
- **Innovate**: Entrepreneurship, growth, continuous improvement, digital transformation.
- **Lead**: Inspire direction, lead change, manage and develop people.

THREE PHASES

The 2016-2020 strategy envisioned three overlapping phases. During 2019, all the signs were that we were on a growth trajectory. However, at this point in time, we are now grappling with the short to medium term impacts of COVID-19. This sees the introduction of a fourth phase over the 2020-2021.

- **Phase 2 (2017-2019)**: Major innovation
- **Phase 3 (2018-2019)**: Continued innovation and strong productivity growth accompanied by significant revenue growth.
- **Phase 4 (2020-2021)**: Mitigating and recovering from COVID-19 through continued innovation and productivity.
WHERE WILL WE BE IN 2030

This refreshed view of the Strategic Plan envisions significant progress against an ambitious program of work that was kicked off with the aim of transforming VU into a leading university of the 21st Century and providing leadership in reconceptualising tertiary education. There will be a continuous evolution of the forward program, as key initiatives such as The VU Way, our institution-wide commitment to place-based Planetary Health and the move towards a precinct-based Campus Master Plan will firm the foundations for VU to become a great university of the future.

VU intends to be at least in the top quartile of Australian universities and public vocational education providers in engaged learning and student satisfaction by 2030. Our graduates will be clearly demonstrating 21st century skills which ensure their success as employees and entrepreneurs. VU will have increasingly world class staff, campuses, digital technologies and partnerships. At the same time the University will continue to rise up the world university rankings. VU can realistically aim to play a key transformational role in its region of the west of Melbourne, impacting on industry and community to foster sustainable industries, liveable cities, and healthier and more prosperous communities. It can also aim to play an increasingly influential role nationally and internationally.

By pursuing its transformational agenda, VU is becoming increasingly financially sustainable, growing revenue substantially, increasing productivity, and on all the key financial performance metrics, becoming a strong performer, relative to its competitors, enabling re-investment in the core business and in other innovative opportunities.

At the same time, VU will be seen as a great place to work and an employer of choice, for a range of important reasons. As we look forward towards the mid-21st century, we believe that Victoria University, The University of Opportunity and Success, can be a leader in reconceptualising tertiary education, and in so doing become a truly great university, as a University without Boundaries: Open, Excellent, Innovative and Future Focussed.
IMPORTANT RESOURCES

Victoria University’s Transformational Agenda – *The White Paper*

COVID-19 Mitigation and Recovery Strategy and Plan (Ten Point Plan) - (accessible to VU Staff only)

The VU Way

The People Strategy

VU Sport Strategy

Bathelmun Yalingwa (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy)

Cultural Diversity Strategy

West of Melbourne Economic Development Alliance
THE NEW WAY TO DO UNI