UCI DCE
LIGHTING THE WAY
STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028

UCI Division of Continuing Education

DEAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Community,

In August 2022, I began my journey as the new dean of the UCI Division of Continuing Education (DCE), at a time when the world was starting to return to "normal" post-pandemic. Changes in the workplace spurred by the pandemic, combined with learners' needs for flexibility, have positioned the DCE incredibly well to support our community. These rapid changes have also encouraged us to reflect on how we can be even more effective. And what better way to learn how than to engage employers, our learners, partners, the community, and industry stakeholders in the development of a new strategic plan?

A gifted group of emerging leaders within DCE helped guide our process and this strategic plan: UCI Division of Continuing Education — Lighting the Way. We came together to reflect on everything — our mission, vision, values, the University's pillars, and our promise to our learners. Additionally, we conducted many surveys of learners, instructors, and our campus collaborators. This information, combined with the data we gathered in our team meetings plus a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), accessibility, sustainability, and positive culture, informs the goals, projects, initiatives, and priorities in this strategic plan.

We discovered that there is a significant need to invest time, energy, and resources into several key foundational areas. By doing so, we will be in a much better position to introduce innovative and groundbreaking projects. Based on this plan, during the 2023-2024 academic year and part of the 2024-2025 academic year we will hone in on modernizing our division. Our focus will be on establishing the systems, standards, guidelines, and best practices across our division to ensure that we can scale at a responsible level and start to rebuild our operational reserves. We'll upgrade our existing programming and develop new programs with a distinct focus on quality and consistency. The next three years will have an innovative focus as we develop new programs in new formats, expand engagement with industry and community partners, and create optimal conditions to partner with our colleagues in the schools at UCI.

As part of UCI, our mission is twofold: to extend the knowledge developed within the university to the outside community, and to develop programming that responds to employer and workforce needs. Our collective work serves to empower. Whether it's through the development of new knowledge and skills, the support to shift careers, or to pique curiosity and maintain engagement through retirement, continuing education serves everyone, and everyone is welcome.

We hope you will watch our progress and take part. The collective noun for UCI's beloved mascot, the Anteater, is "candle." DCE took inspiration from this; we are a candle, indeed. Our goal is to light the way for learners in Orange County and far beyond.

Kristine "Krissy" Collins
Dean, Division of Continuing Education
University of California, Irvine

OUR STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

The 2023-2028 Division of Continuing Education Strategic Plan represents the collective work of our entire DCE team, with input from our learners, instructors, and stakeholders. It is intended to be clear, actionable, and organized in a way that will help you understand what continuing education is all about at UCI and beyond, and what we aim to achieve as we collectively navigate into the future.

Woven throughout this plan is a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), accessibility, sustainability, and positive culture. We are intentional and deliberate regarding the inclusion of these lenses throughout our plan. We firmly believe, as an organization, that to foster a truly inclusive organization we need to apply these lenses to all of the work that we do, by both providing training and ongoing professional development and also by applying a critical viewpoint and multiple perspectives in the design and planning for projects and initiatives.

Continuing education is an exciting discipline that provides access to all — as a result, you should be able to see yourself in our plan. Our learners are everywhere, and everyone. Our role in the process is to light the way for our learners.

MISSION

We educate to empower and elevate.

VISION

Impactful education for all.

VALUES

UCI DCE: We light the way for learners

To fulfill our mission, to achieve our re-envisioned goals, and to implement the strategic imperatives in our plan, DCE commits to being guided by transparency and light.

Learners at the Center

We put learners first by addressing their needs, supporting their experience, and investing in their success. We are committed to providing access to all learners.

Intentional Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

We strive to create and nurture a culture of inclusivity, diversity, equity, and belonging among our learners, instructors, collaborators, and team members.

Greatness

We uphold the highest standard of excellence in all that we do — including best-in-class academic instruction and instructors with deep professional experience. We embrace innovation, spotlighting leading-edge, accessible learning experiences and exceptional services for our learners and partners.

Heart

We lead with heart, compassion, and commitment to understand learners, the community, industry, and our schools on campus. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, we illuminate ideas to provide the most valuable learning experiences possible for our local and global communities, including UCI alumni.

Transparency & Integrity

We are committed to doing what is right — and being transparent about it — even when no one is watching.
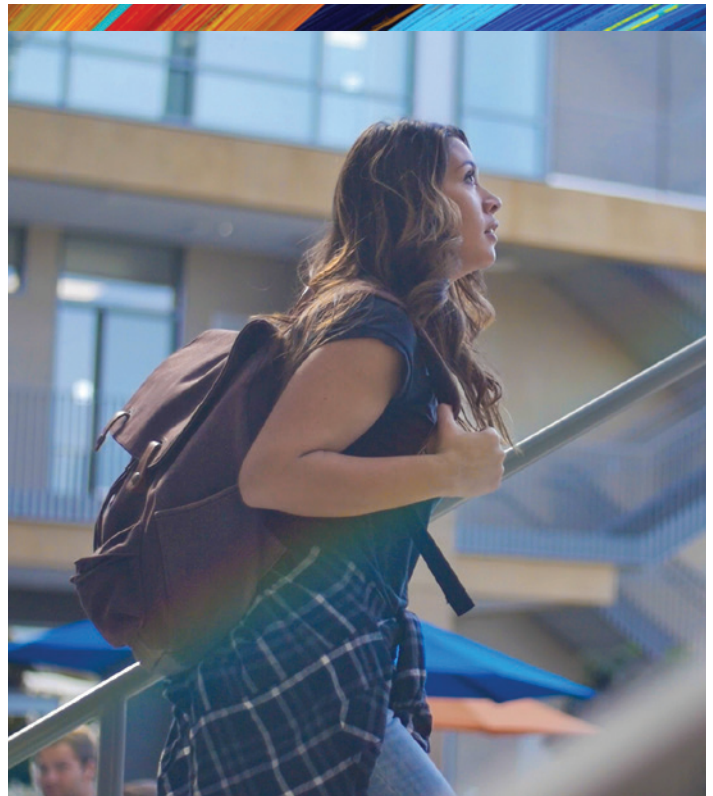
OUR OVERARCHING GOALS

The following broad goals were introduced to guide idea generation, prioritization, and decision-making regarding DCE's 5 pillar-specific goals, projects, and initiatives to:

Light the path for learners on their academic journey and to support them to achieve their academic and professional goals.

Become a regional and global leader in high-quality professional continuing education and international pathway programs.

Diversify and refresh our open enrollment public programs by anticipating and understanding the future of work.

Lead the development of high quality, innovative, and best-in-class educational experiences, both online and on-ground, for a wide range of domestic, corporate, and international learners.

Develop a clear and efficient organizational structure and related processes that allow DCE to be proactive, responsive, and supportive to our learners, instructors, and partners.

Develop mutually beneficial relationships with campus partners, academic schools, external industry, and not-for-profit partners by co-creating programs and services that align with our mission.

Develop a positive and engaged organizational culture built on trust, collaboration, and integrity.

Build our capacity and diversify revenue streams, in the interest of enrollment and revenue growth, while maintaining high quality standards.

PILLAR #1: LEARNERS AT THE CENTER

Goals

1 Enhance the learner experience by providing a comprehensive and learner-centered approach that supports academic success and personal growth

2 Increase access and diversity of our learner community through expansion of financial assistance

3 Reimagine marketing and strategic communications to enhance DCE's reputation, build preference, and improve loyalty among key stakeholders including learners, campus, alumni, industry, and the community

4 Leverage the "marketing agency model" to support existing programs, future programs, and campus programs

(r) Ruweena Howell, Business Administration graduate

Rob Ross, Python for Data Science, Web & Core Programming graduate

Core Projects

The projects in this pillar are focused squarely on the learner experience. We intend to support our learners throughout their journey, from the time they discover DCE, through certificate attainment and beyond. By providing quality experiences and services all the way through the learner journey, we're well positioned to recruit and retain Anteaters for life.

1. **Build authentic connections:** We will create a professional enrollment coaching team. This team will contact prospective learners for all DCE and select UCI partner programs, respond to all incoming inquiries, and provide insightful, authentic advice that fits the learner journey. This team will act as the primary external resource who builds deep connections with our learner community.

2. **Make information easy to find:** We will ensure that learners can find what they want, when they want it, on both our new, revitalized website and in our updated learner portal.

3. **Increase access:** We will aim to find solutions to support learners in accessing high quality programs through deferred tuition programs, grants, and increased scholarship support.

4. **Recognize and celebrate success:** We will recognize learner success through a new learner achievement program that builds on our existing student awards program, but is more transparent, aspirational, and acts as a core component to building an inclusive learner community.

5. **Marketing that truly connects:** We will be strategic, holistic, and authentic in our marketing and communications, by featuring our learners, highlighting authentic stories, and fostering a welcoming tone that conveys belonging and inclusiveness to all our learners and instructors.

PILLAR #2: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Goals for Course Instruction

1. To make DCE an outstanding place to teach by attracting, nurturing, and retaining a best-in-class instructor community
2. To ensure academic quality and encourage all DCE instructors to continue to learn through innovative professional development and support opportunities
3. To expand the instructor pool to reflect our learner community

Goals for Core Curriculum and Program Excellence

1. Focus on academic quality and excellence across all learning experiences while maintaining agility and flexibility
2. Improve existing program quality and establish clear and consistent processes for course development, evaluation, and approvals
3. Leverage data more effectively through clear data collection, analysis, and application

Goals for International Programs

1. Focus on rebuilding our international presence through the development of an international programming, marketing, and business development strategy that aligns with UCI campus goals

Goals for New Program Development

1. Focus on developing new market- and community-driven programming at DCE and in collaboration with campus partners
2. Invest in existing high-value DCE courses to allow for ultimate flexibility and consistent course renewals
3. Meet learners where they are by offering new course formats and providing career support

Core Projects

The projects in this pillar directly correspond to the desire to increase overall program quality in terms of curriculum design, development, and instruction. Many of the projects planned under this pillar signify an adjustment to the way we are already working, and therefore do not require new resources. Projects within this pillar include:

1 **Build exceptional instructor community:** Ensuring we have a diverse and inclusive community of instructors who represent our learners and can relate directly to their working and lived experiences, who are well supported through comprehensive professional development, and who value being part of the UCI DCE instructor community.

2 **Create best-in-class programs:** Investing in our programming, process, and evaluation tools to ensure we are offering best-in-class programs. Focus on investing in stable and high-growth industries, ensuring course content is consistently updated to reflect changes in industry and/or new research. Working with instructors and providing support to ensure that the course experience is rich, interactive, and has optional synchronous learning components, regardless of format. To achieve this, develop an agile and comprehensive governance process that ensures academic quality and intelligent investments.

3 **Attract and support international learners:** Proactively welcoming and serving international learners through a comprehensive strategic approach to programming, instruction, recruitment, and student experience.

4 **UCI collaborations to maximize impact:** Developing meaningful relationships with schools on campus to co-create and support a wide range of professional, self-sustaining programs through transparent business models and truly collaborative support for mutual benefit.

PILLAR #3: OPTIMAL OPERATIONS

Goals

1. Gather and provide meaningful and actionable data by defining optimal methods for collection, analysis, and distribution of data throughout DCE

2. Better understand learner needs, preferences, and outcomes; our goal is to transform learners to ambassadors and, ultimately, to raving fans

3. Be a leader for effective internal communications in a hybrid workforce: implement best practices for providing information when and where it is needed by using a common set of tools, protocols, and definitions

4. Achieve optimal allocation of key resources by defining a clear governance process for DCE

Core Projects

The projects in this pillar serve the entire division and are focused on modernizing our collective work and increasing levels of empowerment and collaboration, leveraging technology where possible, and maximizing high-value work among our brilliant people.

1. **Data drives decisions:** We will become a data-driven organization. At the present time we collect data in a myriad of ways from a wide range of sources. By right-sizing the data we need to make short, medium, and long-term decisions, we intend to synthesize that data and make it available to all team members to empower their daily and long-term work.

2. **Centralize and support:** To support the completion of projects and initiatives and to keep investments on track, we intend to create a small business transformation office that will serve to centralize key people and resources that service the entire organization, including, but not limited to, data analytics, institutional and market research, project management, and, potentially, media production.

3. **Connect consistently:** To communicate more effectively and to be efficient in our global and local relationships, we intend to integrate Salesforce across our entire division, rather than in discrete pockets. We will work with OIT on best practices and learn from campus-wide users.

4. **Reclaim restructuring:** We will deeply examine and adjust our structure to align with the goals, projects, and initiatives that form this strategic plan. The goal for the new structure will be to achieve role clarity, break down silos, encourage courageous leadership, and to drastically increase collaboration and improve organizational culture.

5. **Spend wisely:** We will establish a new governance process for efficient, mindful, and strategic resource allocation.

PILLAR #4: EXCEPTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Goals

1. Strengthen and celebrate alumni relations

2. Enhance and strengthen existing partnerships and seek out new partners by defining/refining products, resources, and mutually beneficial business models

3. Explore the expansion of external partnerships

4. Initiate and enhance campus collaborations for mutual benefit, including self-supporting programs (academic and professional credit)

5. Continue to enrich and nurture existing partnerships to enhance learner impact, reputation, and revenue
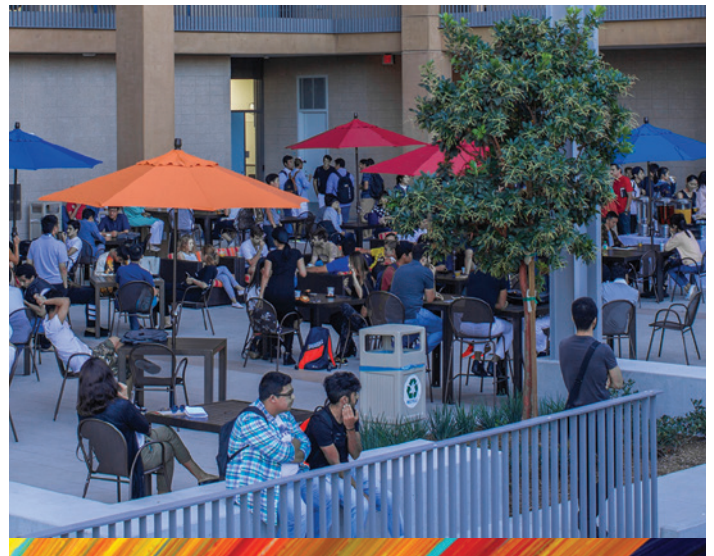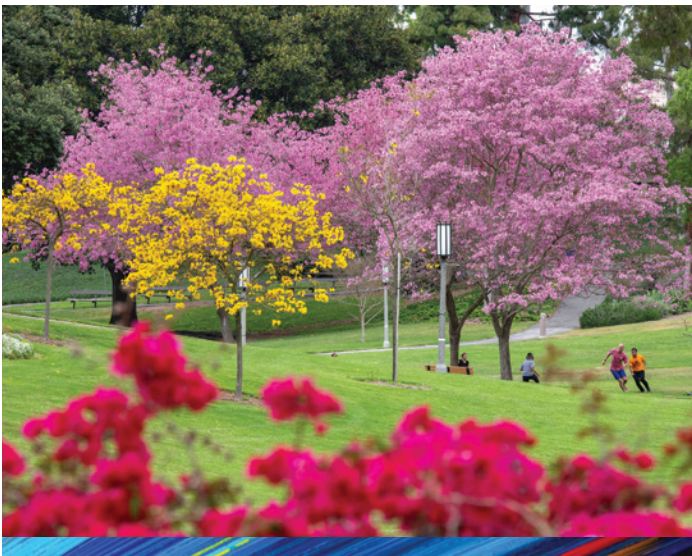
Core Projects

1. **Enhance the alumni experience:** DCE certificate earners should feel connected to UCI during their courses and after they have completed. We will work closely with our colleagues in UCI Alumni Relations to ensure our certificate earners are considered in alumni events, communications, and campaigns. We'll also develop a strategy to keep our alumni engaged on a global scale and provide them with opportunities to stay connected with DCE and become Anteaters for life.

2. **Partner with purpose:** We will actively seek out industry and government partners for the development of new public programs directly tied to workforce development goals, including apprenticeship and upskilling initiatives that serve to enhance the local economy. We will also seek out new professional accreditation partners in the interest of developing course pathways for professional accreditation.

3. **Expand international:** We will broaden and expand our international university partner network by strategically working with partners on campus to identify aligned institutions and developing value-add programming that is distinctive to UCI.

4. **Nurture relationships:** We will continue to nurture and support our existing positive partnerships and be discerning and strategic when considering new partners.

5. **Support effectively:** We will build an internal suite of services to support our campus partners in delivering self-sustaining programs. This will include more robust market research services, instructional design and media support, marketing and enrollment management, learner support, career services, internships, and ongoing data collection in the interest of enhancing our programs overall.

PILLAR #5: BRILLIANT PEOPLE

Our team members are the heartbeat of DCE. They bring their whole selves to work and are full of knowledge and care for our learners, instructors, and partners. But we cannot expect our team members to sit stagnantly and contribute positively; we must consistently invest in their learning and development, provide mentorship opportunities, and bring meaning to their work. Additionally, our team members deserve courageous leaders who set goals, provide resources, remove barriers, and support them to succeed.

Goals

1 Educate, train, and support all team members on UC, UCI, and DCE HR policy, procedures, and practices

2 Develop a talent management strategy to ensure that the organization is prepared to achieve both short- and long-term goals

3 Reignite positive culture and engagement as a collective responsibility

Core Projects

1 **Clarify, coach, and lead courageously:** We will clarify the role of people leaders and the role of HR to ensure our people leaders are aware and well-versed in HR policies and procedures to reduce bottlenecks and empower leaders to be the first line of support for team members.

2 **Flexible work, done well:** We will continually evaluate and improve our hybrid workplace culture by sharing and updating best practices, ensuring expectations are clear, and supporting people leaders to lead differently and effectively. We will aim to have an increased on-site presence but continue to allow for significant flexibility where appropriate.

3 **Mentor and retain:** We will create a formalized mentorship program for team members to learn interdisciplinary skills and acquire knowledge from experienced colleagues, both in person and online. We will also formalize a succession planning process to ensure knowledge retention and workplace training is occurring prior to departures and ensure team members are aware of career growth opportunities.

4 **Invest in growth:** We will formalize a professional development policy to ensure an equitable approach to learning and development, including group training, DCE courses, and other available options relating to specific job skills.

SUMMARY

We are proud of our plan and what it means for the future of DCE. By working together, leveraging our strengths, and developing new and exciting programs, we know that we can be a true asset to UCI, our local community, the state of California, and beyond. By focusing on quality, committing to our learners, improving organizational efficiency, and supporting our brilliant people, our potential is limitless.

Together, we will develop and deliver *impactful education for all*. Please join us!

OUR HISTORY

The University of California, Irvine, Division of Continuing Education has a rich history dating back to 1962 when the very first "extension" courses were offered. Continuing Education as a discipline has historically been focused on educating working adults, providing a combination of knowledge and skills development to correspond to industrial change.

This philosophy holds true today. Continuing educators are committed to ensuring that learners consistently have access to education that meets their needs, regardless of their stage of career or phase of life. Our goal is to respond to the emerging challenges of the world and develop programming that serves to contribute to society's progress.

DCE's former "University Extension" courtyard (2014)

ALIGNING WITH UCI PILLARS

Pillar 1: Growth that Makes a Difference

Grow academic, professional, and self-supporting programs in a way that maintains the integrity of UCI's teaching mission and does not compromise our ability to pursue aggressive research

- *We will build wraparound support services to ensure the success of DCE's self-supporting programs and self-supporting graduate programs on campus.*

Pillar 2: First in Class
These goals can be considered in the context of professional continuing education:

Foster excellence in teaching and learning

- *Our plan is squarely focused on raising the level of academic quality and excellence in course design and instruction across all programs.*

Utilizing modern technological tools to create the most effective learning environments

- *We will continue to lead in the areas of course design and innovation to respond to a wide range of learners with different learning and accessibility needs in the interest of maintaining an open, welcoming, and inclusive environment.*

Integrate student life with educational experiences

- *In continuing education, student life can be framed differently to include work and family responsibilities. Many of our courses align with industry and thereby provide opportunities for learners to work on real-life and real-work projects. We intend to explore opportunities for apprenticeship, workplace training recognition, and laddering as well as closer alignment to the needs of the future workforce in Orange County, in collaboration with our colleagues on campus.*

Ensure that UCI's educational opportunities are an engine for social mobility, impact, and positive innovation

- *DCE will continue to contribute to social mobility in the region by offering accessible programs that allow for upskilling, reskilling, and access to career-ready resources. We will also aim to increase access through an enhanced scholarship fund and variable financial support options.*

Pillar 3: Great Partners

Create a powerful Anteater-for-Life ethos

Create global networks and other connection opportunities for our learners and alumni.

- *At DCE this means treating our certificate earners as UCI DCE alumni and bringing them much closer to the broader alumni network.*
- *As an open enrollment division, we always make it easy for the community to interact with us; we need to find ways to partner on campus to amplify our mission and welcome in our local community.*

Partner with Orange County to develop a national model for how to live responsibly and well in the 21st century

Enhance the learning environment for Orange County citizens through dynamic engagement across the full educational spectrum, utilize UCI DCE for online and remote learning, engage the K-12 system with an emphasis on underserved communities, and undertake an educational needs assessment of the county's citizens.

- *More than just online and remote learning, DCE can be a vehicle to scale training and learning within communities.*

Pillar 4: New Paths for Our Brilliant Future

Develop a sustainable financial plan

- *As a self-supporting unit on campus, we can scale, grow, and contribute more significantly to our broader campus. To achieve this, we need to ensure institutional support, clear goal alignment, and collaboration. We look forward to contributing to the growth and financial sustainability of our campus.*

OUR PROCESS

To create this strategic plan, we identified a gifted group of 20 emerging leaders within DCE to guide our process. The "leaders by action" — not necessarily by title — took on the responsibility of contributing to, and participating in, the planning and facilitation of two full-team, interactive, all-day sessions. Convening and considering for approximately 140 employees with divergent opinions, different roles, and levels of responsibility was a significant task.

We came together as a group twice. First, we convened to reflect on our mission, vision, values, and pillars. The second session was formed to discuss each of the pillars, complete an analysis, and brainstorm big ideas for improvement. In these sessions we aimed to rebuild our trust, culture, and support for significant institutional change and renewal.

Additionally, we conducted surveys of recent learners, instructors, student-workers, partners, clients, and our campus collaborators. This information, combined with the data we gathered in our all-staff meetings, resulted in the goals, projects, initiatives, and priorities in this plan.

Following all this, we brought DCE's Leadership Council together to assess our values and expectations, and review and prioritize projects and initiatives. This work was made easy by the exceptional contributions exerted by our team over the preceding months.

Thank you to the brilliant and dedicated people at UCI DCE who developed this plan from the ground up in 2022-2023.

To Our Learners:

We promise to support you through your entire DCE process. From the moment you hear about our program and visit our website to when you connect with our enrollment team, enroll, learn, participate in courses, complete courses and certificates, and then ultimately search for or change jobs, we will be there for you. And if you are here for a new outlook or personal project, we are also here for you. DCE will light the way for you toward a more meaningful career and life. Our promise is to serve you with the utmost care and provide you with the tools and knowledge you need, whenever and wherever you need it. DCE learners are Anteaters for life.

Welcome to the candle!

Learners taking a break in the DCE courtyard