Cross-School Teaching Opportunities Committee

Summary Report and Recommendations

Spring 2025

Executive Summary

Duke's longstanding strength in interdisciplinarity represents a crucial dimension of the university's culture. Yet for all the interest and innovation in this area over the past thirty years, persistent structural and administrative barriers continue to limit opportunities for cross-school teaching and learning.

The Cross-School Teaching Opportunities Committee was charged by the Provost with identifying sensible, actionable strategies to reduce barriers and expand meaningful cross-school teaching and learning. After extensive consultation with faculty, students, administrators, and alumni, and an analysis of institutional data and existing practices, the committee offers a set of "headline" recommendations to facilitate opportunities for cross-school learning, reduce institutional friction, and support new pathways for faculty and students to engage across disciplinary and school boundaries:

1. **Expand short-form courses and hackathon-style competitions for interdisciplinary learning** to promote low-stakes, high-impact engagement across disciplines
2. **Develop a broader array of cross-school capstones** in strategic areas where collaborative, real-world work is critical
3. **Launch an AI-powered discovery tool** to help students and faculty understand policies and discover/navigate opportunities across schools
4. **Expand a "level-up" library** to give students the preparation and confidence to succeed in unfamiliar fields
5. **Cultivate a donor pool to advance cross-school priorities** to financially support and incentivize faculty and schools that embrace cross-school teaching
6. **Prompt units to pursue easy wins and strategic collaborations**, phasing in a suite of proposed reforms that range from quick fixes to deeper, systemic alignment

These recommendations are supported by a set of targeted, practical proposals that schools and the Office of the Provost can implement to extend cross-unit collaboration beyond the important undertakings that already exist. All of our recommendations are rooted in the conviction that by empowering students and faculty to move across boundaries, Duke can elevate both disciplinary excellence and university-wide impact.

We propose these recommendations at a pivotal moment in Duke's history and in the history of higher education more broadly. Duke and its peer institutions face an array of converging pressures: rapidly evolving financial constraints, campus polarization, public mistrust, shifting career landscapes for graduates, and an imperative to prepare students for complex global challenges.

In this context, cross-school teaching and learning represents not just a feature of academic innovation, but a strategic necessity. Cross-school collaboration enables Duke to meet the present moment by building bridges rather than retreating to silos – an approach that better serves students, energizes faculty, and makes more effective use of existing resources. With the right incentives and

support, these efforts can also create new revenue opportunities through innovative course offerings and expanded alumni and philanthropic engagement. Fostering cross-school opportunities can also enhance faculty and student recruitment by offering distinctive, future-facing educational experiences, and improve our national and global reputation through visible, high-impact programs.

Over the past quarter century, cross-school collaboration has frequently enabled Duke to turn bold ideas into lasting impact. Leaning into and building on this foundation will help us not only weather the challenges of this present moment but extend our reputation as a premier university.

Charge and Process

The provost charged the Cross-School Teaching Opportunities Committee with evaluating how Duke can more effectively support cross-school teaching and learning. The committee examined structural, curricular, financial, technological, and cultural factors that facilitate – or inhibit – interdisciplinary and cross-school engagement. On the basis of this analysis, we developed concrete recommendations to support students and faculty in such engagement, while recognizing the inherent trade-offs between school-based priorities and cross-school collaboration.

The committee included representation from across Duke's undergraduate and graduate schools, central academic units, and interdisciplinary programs, including faculty, two graduate students, an undergraduate student, and a staff member. Over the 2024-2025 academic year, the committee:

- Mapped current facilitators and barriers to cross-school teaching.
- Conducted focus group sessions with more than 100 faculty, administrators (including DUSAs, DGSAs and business managers), graduate students,[1] and alumni. A report on what we learned from these focus groups is available upon request.
- Analyzed Office of Assessment data to get a baseline read of how faculty and students are currently engaging in cross-school activity. A description of the data is also available upon request.
- Solicited and reviewed policies and practices for faculty teaching credit across schools. A summary of what we learned from the faculty teaching-credit survey is again available upon request.
- Reviewed examples of innovative interdisciplinary and cross-school courses, programs, and models.

The recommendations that follow are grounded in these consultations and informed by successful models already in place across Duke.

Rationale and Benefits

While cross-school teaching and learning may not be essential – or even desirable – for every student or faculty member, it can be a profoundly enriching and even transformative experience for many. We

[1] We attempted to conduct focus groups with undergraduates, but scheduling proved challenging.

identified four key ways in which cross-school teaching and learning can be especially valuable for students and for faculty.

Cross-school teaching and learning enables:

1. **Cross-school association**, creating opportunities for students and faculty to connect across schools, fostering meaningful intellectual and social interactions that bridge disciplinary divides.

2. **Exposure to additional disciplines and topics**, enabling students to engage with the ideas and methods of other disciplines, complementing their primary training and broadening their intellectual horizons.

These first two benefits come from *connecting people across the university* and fostering a culture of learning from diverse perspectives. Such connections can occur even within a disciplinary context, such as a law student taking a corporate strategy class at Fuqua, or an economics doctoral student being mentored by a Sanford faculty member whose research focuses on economic inequality.

Cross-school teaching and learning also fosters:

3. **Interdisciplinary skill building and collaboration,** creating opportunities for students and faculty to participate in high-quality multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary coursework, research, and community engagement and develop the skills and perspectives needed to thrive in collaborative work that crosses disciplinary boundaries.

4. **Opportunities to explore compelling societal challenges,** by supporting faculty and students in addressing pressing, complex issues (such as responding to climate change, the social implications of artificial intelligence, or the uneven benefits of technological change and economic growth) and other "wicked problems" that demand cross-disciplinary collaboration.

These next two benefits stem from *engaging across disciplinary boundaries*, both in developing interdisciplinary skills essential for today's and tomorrow's careers and in addressing thorny societal problems at both local and global levels. To achieve these objectives, we must build on innovative approaches to teaching and learning that integrate multiple disciplinary perspectives and move beyond traditional academic silos.

At the same time, disciplinary depth remains essential. Our efforts to support cross-school engagement should never undermine the crucial methodological training that disciplines provide. In fact, cross-school opportunities make disciplinary expertise even more valuable – students and faculty contribute most meaningfully in interdisciplinary settings when they bring a distinctive, well-developed perspective and related analytical skills to the table. Far from being in tension, disciplinary excellence and cross-school engagement are natural complements.

Findings

Our committee identified four broad findings that shape the final recommendations:

1. **Cross-School Teaching and Learning Facilitates Meaningful Experiences and Impact:** For many faculty and students who engage across schools, the experience and outcomes bring significant benefits. Faculty have the opportunity to teach topics of interest, mentor excellent students outside their disciplines, collaborate and learn from faculty peers, and expand their research portfolios by tapping into expertise beyond their own discipline. For students, cross-school learning broadens their intellectual perspectives, connects them with mentors and peers in other units, and allows them to explore interdisciplinary challenges.

2. **Structural and Policy Barriers Limit Cross-School Engagement**
   Too often, students and faculty face opaque policies, unclear incentives, and bureaucratic hurdles when trying to engage in cross-school teaching and learning. These hurdles range from registration limitations and calendar misalignments to inconsistent valuing of cross-school engagement in APT processes and the calculation of teaching credit to the need for faculty to meet departmental or school-specific requirements and priorities.

3. **Faculty and Students Report Strong Demand for Cross-School Experiences and Willingness to Innovate**
   Many (though by no means all) faculty express high interest in engaging cross-school learners and teaching (or co-teaching) across units – especially when supported by clear incentives and recognition, straightforward administrative coordination, and flexible structures that allow space for both interdisciplinary innovation and disciplinary specificity. A significant fraction of students similarly value interdisciplinary experiences, but often need extra help identifying clear pathways to discover or pursue them.

4. **Cross-School Teaching and Learning Offers Significant Opportunities for Signature Innovation**
   Duke's unique positioning and culture support bold interdisciplinary work, yet limited communication and awareness across schools, coordination challenges, and insufficient incentives (or clear disincentives) for cross-unit teaching and mentoring all make it difficult to fully realize our potential in this area. The current environment calls for wide-ranging creativity to fulfill our institutional mission and best serve our students, while also being more efficient with our resources. With clearer and more recognizable routes to cross-school activity, we can better leverage and energize our outstanding faculty and better connect students to experiences that can be vital to their educational journey at Duke and beyond.

Conceptual Framework and Key Considerations

Cross-school teaching and learning at Duke takes many forms and is a complex, multifaceted topic. To clarify and organize our thinking, the committee developed a conceptual framework[2] that focuses on

[2] This conceptual framework is a game-theoretic model. See Chapter 11 ("Collective-Action Games") of *Games of Strategy: 6th edition* by Avinash Dixit, Susan Skeath, and David McAdams (W.W. Norton 2025) for a nuanced discussion

students and faculty as the key decision-makers whose *opportunities* and *choices* determine the vibrancy of Duke's cross-school culture. Schools and the overall university play a vital supporting role by furnishing information and other empowering tools, providing incentives and fostering cultural norms, and creating and supporting signature programs – and many of our recommendations are directed at school administrators and university leadership. Ultimately, however, our focus is on students and faculty, and how sensible policies can enable and empower them.

For students considering cross-school learning, we identified four key considerations:

- *Feasibility:* Is there room in my program's curriculum for cross-school learning experiences?
- *Discovery:* What classes, research opportunities, and co-curricular activities in other schools will allow me to pursue my educational goals?
- *Confidence:* Given my background, will I "fit in" and be able to succeed outside of my school?
- *Enrollment:* Am I able to enroll in classes or participate in other schools that appeal to me?

For faculty considering cross-school teaching, we identified four key considerations:

- *Feasibility*: Is there room in my unit's teaching plan to allow me to teach in another school or participate in a cross-school university program?
- *Discovery:* What kinds of students would I love to teach or include in my research? And with whom might I co-teach?
- *Recognition:* Will my cross-school efforts "count" or be recognized/rewarded in some way?
- *Synergy:* Will such efforts extend or deepen my research capacities and/or create new avenues for collaboration?

Appendix A of this report lays out in more detail the goals that we identified as a committee for improving student and faculty experience with cross-school teaching and learning, to unleash Duke's full cross-school potential.

Recommendations

A. "Headline" Recommendations

Our committee developed several specific recommendations that we feel are worth highlighting. For each of these "headline" recommendations, we provide a summary description, including a brief consideration of costs and benefits, and identify the unit or units who would be responsible for implementing the recommendation.

1. Interdisciplinary "Shorts": Short-Form Courses and Competitions for Cross-School Learning

of *coordination games* and *public-good games*, which are the most relevant in the context of cross-school teaching and learning.

Expand short-form courses and hackathon-style competitions for interdisciplinary learning to promote low-stakes, high-impact engagement across disciplines

Owner: Office of the Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies; Learning Innovation and Lifetime Education

Summary: For many students, programmatic requirements often leave little space for cross-school exploration, which limits faculty capacity to design courses for cross-school learners. To address this situation, we propose that the university invest in expanding offerings like those already provided by the OIT Co-Lab and the Summer Graduate Academy, widening access to Interdisciplinary Short Courses ("Shorts") – short, intensive courses (e.g., one- to two-week workshops) that count for credit and expose students to different disciplines. Hackathons are already common on campus, particularly in areas related to information technology. In early 2024, Duke also piloted an interdisciplinary weekend ideation challenge for all graduate and professional students, focused on identification of potential campus sustainability projects. We propose efforts to extend the reach of these co-curricular experiences, especially in areas with strong student interest.

Cost Implications: The key cost-related question is whether the faculty who teach in the Shorts program will be compensated for their teaching time. Many faculty would love to be able to expose more students to the ideas and methods (and excitement!) of their field, but don't have a mechanism to do so.[3] For such faculty, the envisioned Shorts program offers an effective and relatively low-cost way for them to find and connect with students from other schools who are most eager to learn from them. The program could therefore be a success even if Shorts teaching is not financially compensated, with costs limited mostly to seed funding for course development. There may also be opportunities to tap Ph.D. students to serve as Shorts instructors, as has already occurred through the Summer Graduate Academy.

Some schools may also find creative ways to leverage Shorts courses to promote their programs or even generate new revenue,[4] in which case they will have an incentive to offer teaching credit to their faculty for such courses. Because of their potential for transformative impact, a major donor might also be interested in endowing the program so that faculty who teach popular Shorts on a sustained basis are financially compensated.

Of course, short courses are just one of many low-cost ways to enable students and faculty to dip their toes across disciplinary boundaries. For example, the "Check Out a Historian" program has successfully connected History faculty with students and faculty from across the university. A formalized guest-lecturer network could similarly help faculty connect and bring one another into their classrooms across departments and schools.

2. Cross-School Capstones in Priority Areas (e.g., Climate Change, AI and Society)

[3] For instance, a finance professor at Fuqua who is married to a nurse told us that he would love to teach a short course on "Personal Finance" to nursing students, but currently has no way to do so.

[4] For example, alumni and other working professionals might pay to take a short course, as a way to keep their skills sharp, expose themselves to additional disciplinary perspectives, and identify outstanding current students to hire.

Develop a broader array of cross-school capstones in strategic areas where collaborative, real-world work is critical

Owner: Office of the Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies; Participating schools/units

Summary: Several Duke master's programs (e.g., MEM at Nicholas, MPP at Sanford, MEM at Pratt, and MIDS by iiD and SSRI) feature capstone projects in which students work with a real-world client during the second year of their program. Some of these, like the MEM and MIDS capstones, are intentionally team-based and interdisciplinary. Enabling students from different programs to participate together in such capstone experiences would be an exciting opportunity to lean into Duke's interdisciplinary strength, mirror the collaborative workplace teams that students will join after graduation, and offer even more value to the "clients" whose participation makes these capstones possible.

Cost Implications: Some effort and resources will be required from the university in support of units (e.g., seed funding and expertise sharing) when launching a new cross-school capstone program. But the intent of this recommendation is just to *assist* units in identifying, developing, and executing on opportunities that benefit them all – not least by exposing a broader range of employers to their students through the capstone experience. Indeed, to the extent that a cross-school capstone allows schools to economize on overall staff and faculty time, such programs could reduce overall costs to the schools involved (relative to each running its own distinct capstone program).

3. AI Tool for Curricular Discovery

Launch an AI-powered discovery tool to help students and faculty understand policies and discover/navigate opportunities across schools

Owner: Trinity College; Office of the Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies; Office of Information Technology

Summary: A number of interdisciplinary units at Duke provide guidance about available courses and co-curricular opportunities related to specific interdisciplinary pathways. Those pathways are particularly clear when connected to interdisciplinary certificates, minors, or majors, like "Innovation and Entrepreneurship," "Health Policy," "Digital Intelligence," "Energy Engineering," or "Global Health." Students who have excellent advisers or who devote significant time to exploring options around Duke often can craft less-common pathways, as through undergraduate interdepartmental majors or Program II.

We see great promise in creating an AI tool that would "mine" the course catalog and school policies, as well as curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular offerings, and faculty research interests and teaching experience. The tool would respond to prompts about specific interdisciplinary and cross-school configurations by highlighting relevant resources and educational offerings. Faculty members who would like to have cross-school students will also appreciate being able to post descriptions of the types of students they welcome and any prerequisites for success; the AI tool would then digest that content and guide qualified and interested students to appropriate opportunities.

A version of such an AI is already under development under the auspices of Trinity College and will be refined through a Code+ project during summer 2025.

Cost implications: Relatively modest costs to develop and support the AI tool.

4. Library of "Level-Ups" for Cross-School Learners

Expand a "level-up" library to give students the preparation and confidence to succeed in unfamiliar fields

Owner: Learning Innovation and Lifetime Education; Participating schools/units

Summary: Students often hesitate to take a class outside of their home school because they don't know if they are adequately prepared. Faculty also naturally hesitate to admit a cross-school student into their class if they fear that the student may lag behind or lack sufficient shared context to "fit" into the class. The Health Sector Management (HSM) program within Fuqua solves this problem by offering level-up materials and experiences for students who want to take HSM electives. The Center for Computational Thinking has similarly created extensive modules across the broad terrain of data science. We propose that the university make a concerted effort to support faculty and schools in the creation of similar level-up materials, and to do so in a coordinated way so that we can build up a Level-Up Library that can then be adapted and repurposed to the greatest extent possible.

Cost implications: Moderate costs to support the creation of level-up materials, which should be focused on the highest-value opportunities as identified from emerging trends in student, faculty, and employer interest.

Some schools may also find creative ways to leverage Level-Up materials to promote their programs or even generate new revenue. In particular, to the extent that Level-Ups allow *current students* from different educational backgrounds to succeed and contribute meaningfully in a course, the same materials could also allow *alumni and other continuing learners* to take (and pay for) that course.

5. Major Donor Pool to Support Schools that Embrace Cross-School Opportunities

Cuitivate a donor pool to advance cross-school priorities to financially support and incentivize faculty and schools that embrace cross-school teaching

Owner: Office of the President, Office of the Provost

Summary: Interdisciplinarity is Duke's "superpower," but we have not achieved our full potential because schools understandably focus on developing and supporting their own programs. In economic terms, schools create a *positive externality* for other schools when they support cross-school learning – whether by encouraging their faculty to teach in other schools or by increasing access to their classes for students from other schools. As a result, we should expect there to be *less* cross-school learning than would be best for Duke students as a whole. Sufficient philanthropy could change this game by, in effect, providing resources to the schools that themselves give the most to the rest of the university.

Cost implications: Unlike the other headline recommendations, this one would require a large pool of donor money, which of course entails opportunity cost – those donor funds could potentially have been solicited for other purposes instead. However, such "donor crowd-out" will be limited if the donors who are attracted by the idea of shaping the interdisciplinary landscape at Duke – who want to make Duke even greater than it already is in this regard – are not the same as the ones who (say) care most about business-school education or supporting disciplinary chairs in Arts & Sciences. Indeed, to the extent that the university is able to draw in new donors, this proposal could be revenue-positive overall.

6. Identification of "Easy Wins" and "Harder Win-Wins" for Schools and Units

Prompt units to pursue easy wins and strategic collaborations, phasing in a suite of proposed reforms that range from quick fixes to deeper, systemic alignment

Schools and other units naturally focus on developing their own programs and supporting their own students within those programs. As a result, schools may not always give full attention to the issues associated with cross-school teaching and learning. And as long as other schools are not deeply engaged in supporting cross-school opportunities, the benefits to any given school from doing so are limited – as the saying goes, "it takes two to tango." The goal of this recommendation is to change that status quo by prompting all units – simultaneously, following this report's release – to consider a package of *individual actions* and *cross-school collaborations* that would enhance Duke's cross-school culture at minimal cost (or even with cost savings) and ultimately benefit their faculty and their students as well as those at other schools.

- **Section B** provides a list of individual actions that we recommend units consider. Most of these items fall into the category of "Easy Wins" that schools can achieve on their own, or by taking the recommended action together with other schools.
- **Section C** provides a list of tougher cross-school challenges that we feel offer big potential benefits but will be more difficult to implement and, in particular, will require deeper and sustained cross-school collaboration. These recommendations point to harder "win-win" opportunities for schools that choose to work together in achieving them.

B. "Easy Win" Recommendations for Schools/Units

At this moment of financial strain across higher education, it is understandable that schools might focus inward, prioritizing core programs and pulling back from broader university engagement. Yet this is also precisely when cross-school collaboration can offer the greatest value – both educationally and financially – by improving efficiency.

The committee identified a range of actions that we feel schools should consider implementing right away or in the near future, because of their potential to lower barriers to cross-school teaching and learning at

relatively low cost.[5] Several of these recommendations are based on ideas heard in focus groups or current best-practices across the university.

1. **Clarify cross-school enrollment guidance** to ensure students can easily understand how to take classes outside their home school:
    - Clearly communicate which outside courses are available, how they count toward degree requirements, and what the enrollment steps are.
    - Review existing materials and train advisors to share this information consistently and proactively, drawing on the AI tool described above.
    - Ensure updated information is fed into any AI tool used by students and advisers.
2. **Review curricular requirements** with an eye toward opportunities for simplification and flexibility:
    - Look for opportunities to reduce curricular complexity at the margins, which increases the need to deploy faculty time toward courses that meet a department or school's degree requirements.
    - Consider ways to embed signature programs like Bass Connections, Summer+ programs, and DukeEngage into curricular requirements.
3. **Appoint a cross-school liaison** in each unit to support cross-school engagement:
    - Designate a staff or faculty point person within each unit to serve as a go-to contact for questions about cross-school teaching and enrollment.
    - This liaison should help disseminate internal policies, coordinate with central offices, and share best practices with other units.
4. **Pre-approve common outside electives to** reduce administrative hurdles to enrollment:
    - Identify and publish a list of commonly approved electives from other schools.
    - Focus on courses that align with a degree program's goals and/or are frequently petitioned by students to count toward degree requirements.
    - Establish pre-approvals to streamline decision-making and signal openness to interdisciplinary exploration.
5. **Document and share faculty teaching policies** to help demystify cross-school teaching policies across units:

[5] Implementing these recommendations will require attention from school leadership and/or mechanisms of faculty governance and, in some cases, new responsibilities for existing staff members. But we feel that most (if not all) of these recommendations can be pursued without significant ongoing costs.

- Catalogue how your unit handles teaching credit for cross-school courses, MOUs or agreements with other units, and recognition of interdisciplinary and cross-school work in evaluations or determination of teaching effort.
- Document options for Ph.D. students to serve as TAs outside their degree program, such as the Bass Instructional Fellowship, and any other internal mechanisms.
- Share these policies or FAQs with central administration to facilitate cross-school awareness of options and choices.

6. **Recognize cross-school faculty contributions** by formalizing appreciation for faculty who engage beyond their home school:
   - Consider modes of crediting cross-school courses and participation in signature university programs as part of overall faculty effort.
   - Consider including such contributions in promotion and tenure criteria, and nominating faculty for university-wide recognition.
7. **Support interdisciplinary mentorship** and promote opportunities for students to learn from faculty outside their own school:
   - Promote match-making mechanisms like MUSER to faculty, postdocs, and students, so that they are aware of opportunities to post or discover research opportunities that might link a faculty member, postdoc, or graduate student to undergraduates from a different school.
   - Encourage faculty with cross-disciplinary experience to participate in opt-in mentorship programs.
   - Help match students with mentors based on interests, research areas, or career goals, in part by connecting them to university-wide interdisciplinary units that facilitate such efforts.

C. Recommendations for Longer-Term "Win-Win" Collaboration Across Schools/Units

Schools already collaborate in important ways to foster cross-school teaching and learning. Major existing efforts include joint degree programs at the graduate level (e.g., MD-MBA, JD-Ph.D.) and cross-school degree programs, such as the University Ph.D. Program in Environmental Policy between Sanford and Nicholas or the new Master's in Business, Climate, and Sustainability between Fuqua and Nicholas. The Graduate School's Bass Instructional Fellowships provide funding for Ph.D. students to serve as teaching assistants outside their home programs. And the just funded Interdisciplinary Graduate Education Collaboratives (IGECs) will rely on significant coordination among departments in more than a single school.

The committee nonetheless identified several additional ways schools could expand these partnerships. We see the current financial environment as providing an additional impetus for experimentation with

shared resources, new forms of recognition, and joint-teaching models that maximize limited time and staffing.

1. **Participate in interdisciplinary working groups** to collaborate with other schools and university-wide interdisciplinary units to address shared barriers:
    - Join or initiate working groups to co-design solutions to challenges such as enrollment logistics, calendar mismatches, or joint capstones.

2. **Explore teaching swaps**, either bilaterally or multilaterally, that meet schools' teaching needs by sharing relevant faculty expertise across schools.

3. **Consolidate courses with similar content:**
    - Where courses in different programs offer similar content, explore opportunities to consolidate such courses on a cross-listed basis.

4. **Create or contribute to thematic course lists** to help students more easily discover relevant interdisciplinary courses:
    - Work with other units to identify existing courses that connect to common or emerging themes like "AI & Society" or "Health and Equity."
    - Include key details such as prerequisites, accessibility for non-majors, and relevant cross-school enrollment policies.
    - Identify "level-up" opportunities for students to prepare them to engage beyond their primary field.

Conclusion

As Duke President Vincent Price noted in his 2017 Inaugural Address, "Our new century cries out for a university where the drive to discover is not hemmed by disciplinary logics; where philosophers work side-by-side with physicians and physicists; where nurses find inspiration in narrative theory; where mechanical engineers team up with marine biologists or musicians. I believe Duke can and will be that university." Eight years ago, our university already offered many educational opportunities reflecting this vision; today, we can point to even more.

Faculty and students across Duke continue to express keen interest in expanding cross-school learning experiences and show considerable ingenuity toward that end. Indeed, a growing number of Bass Connections projects not only span disciplinary and school lines at Duke, but also incorporate faculty and students from other universities – both nearby (e.g., North Carolina Central University) and across the world (e.g., Duke Kunshan University; Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal; Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda; Federal Rural University in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Undergraduates who construct their own majors through Program II surface emerging issues and novel interdisciplinary linkages. Duke's UICs have recently developed cross-cutting certificate programs in areas such as health policy and digital intelligence, and have significantly expanded offerings in innovation and entrepreneurship. Fuqua and the Nicholas School have jointly launched a new Master's degree in Business, Climate, and Sustainability.

Yet, as this report underscores, significant obstacles remain for faculty designing educational opportunities that span disciplines and schools, and for students at all levels who would like to take advantage of these opportunities. Such barriers range from complex program requirements and informational deficits to incentive structures and unit cultures that privilege teaching and learning within the home unit. It is of course crucial that disciplinary degree programs continue to provide their students with a strong grounding in relevant context, theory, and method. However, Duke's comparative educational advantage increasingly lies in melding disciplinary strength with experiential – and often interdisciplinary – learning – modes of collaborative inquiry that engage faculty and students across schools and even with partners beyond campus.

As Duke navigates dramatic shifts in national policy, significant reductions in public funding for higher education, and a recalibration of both global strategy and engagement with its city and region, the university is undertaking a structural realignment that compels substantial budgetary cutbacks. This fiscal reality led the committee to focus on recommendations that require modest investments of time and financial resources, potentially align with new revenue-generating opportunities, and target promising avenues for philanthropy through the MADE FOR THIS campaign. Today's challenging circumstances highlight the need to align cross-school undertakings with the constraints facing individual schools and the university as a whole. However, these new realities only add to the case for strengthening the educational connections that bridge our schools and university-wide interdisciplinary units.

The recommendations throughout this report aim to build on established successes and best practices across the university, and emphasize concrete, achievable steps that schools can take on their own or in coordination with one another – *feasibility* being a key watchword. At the same time, we have strived to remain alert to the possibilities for "outrageous ambition" that have propelled Duke forward since the 1970s. Thanks to a half-century of investment in educational excellence, students from across the United States and the world now dream of coming to Duke. We are confident that, with the implementation of these recommendations, Duke can remain at the forefront of pedagogical innovation, sustain and extend our reputation for stellar liberal arts education and doctoral training, and deepen our offerings in experiential learning – now and into the future.

Appendix A: Goals that Guided our Work

Our overarching strategic goal is to enable and sustain cross-school opportunities – including learning, teaching, research, and community engagement – that advance the four core objectives introduced at the start of this report: (i) cross-school association, (ii) exposure to additional disciplines, (iii) development of interdisciplinary skills and perspectives, and (iv) engagement with compelling societal challenges. To help realize these objectives, the committee identified a set of more specific goals aimed at enhancing the cross-school experience for students and faculty and at activating schools and the central administration to support a vibrant and efficient cross-school culture at Duke.

Goals for Improving the Student Experience

1. **Illuminate Cross-Disciplinary Pathways:** Help students identify and understand cross-disciplinary pathways that align with their academic and personal goals, including relevant policies about degree requirements.

   Students face steep opportunity costs and may only have space for a few intellectual excursions outside of their home discipline. By illuminating fruitful pathways, we can help students make informed choices.

2. **Facilitate Feasibility of Fruitful Cross-Disciplinary Pathways:** Ensure that when fruitful cross-school pathways complement a program's disciplinary training, program requirements are flexible enough to allow students to pursue those opportunities.

   Schools and programs should actively evaluate opportunities for cross-school learning and, where appropriate, strategically adjust their programmatic requirements to enable their students to leverage those opportunities.

3. **Support Opportunities for Interdisciplinary Exposure.** Create and sustain opportunities for students to participate in high-quality multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary coursework, research, and community engagement.

   In order to empower more students to discover fruitful cross-disciplinary pathways and benefit from innovative cross-school courses and other interdisciplinary experiences, faculty must create and teach these courses and schools must support them.

4. **Provide Clearer Channels for Cross-School Discovery:** Enable students to easily discover courses, seminars, and learning experiences across schools, with accurate, transparent information on academic policies, prerequisites, expectations, and outcomes.

   Students should have confidence that their interests and qualifications align with course offerings before committing, reducing uncertainty and promoting better academic matches.

5. **Streamline Enrollment:** Simplify processes and reduce frictions associated with enrolling in courses at other schools.

Wherever possible, and at acceptable cost, bureaucratic barriers, administrative complexities, and poorly aligned academic calendars should not hinder intellectual exploration.

6. **Reduce Barriers for Mentorship and Peer Collaboration**: Enable students to more easily identify and connect with faculty mentors and potential peer collaborators across schools.

   Facilitating these connections supports students' academic and professional growth by broadening their networks and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.

Goals for Improving the Faculty Experience

1. **Streamline and Clarify Policies for Cross-School Teaching:** Provide faculty with clear, consistent, and easily accessible guidelines for cross-school teaching, including transparent processes for approval and credit allocation.

   This objective includes cataloging and amplifying (and where beneficial, formalizing) ad hoc solutions that departments are already using to facilitate cross-school teaching. Clear and consistent policies reduce administrative barriers and empower faculty to pursue interdisciplinary teaching with confidence.

2. **Acknowledge and Reward Cross-School Contributions:** Enhance recognition and credit for faculty who engage in interdisciplinary teaching, including teaching credit and acknowledgment in APT (appointment, promotion, and tenure) evaluations.

   By explicitly valuing cross-school contributions and reducing institutional barriers, Duke will encourage faculty to innovate and collaborate across fields and build connections across the university.

3. **Facilitate Cross-School Networking and Collaboration:** Expand and enhance opportunities for faculty to connect with colleagues outside their home units, fostering intellectual exchange, collaborative research, and interdisciplinary course development.

   Interdisciplinary workshops, faculty learning communities, and cross-school seminars are examples of ways to help faculty build meaningful connections across fields and develop innovative teaching and research ideas.

4. **Support Interdisciplinary Course Development and Teaching:** Provide resources, training, and mentorship for faculty to design and teach interdisciplinary courses, including support for scaffolding course materials for students with diverse disciplinary backgrounds.

   Options for support could include grants for course development, instructional design support, and professional development opportunities to enhance teaching skills for interdisciplinary audiences.

5. **Support Mentorship and Advising for Cross-Disciplinary Learning:** Establish mentorship networks and peer-advisory groups to support faculty in cross-disciplinary teaching, research, and community engagement.

   Faculty who are new to cross-school teaching or interdisciplinary collaboration can benefit from the experiences of colleagues who have successfully navigated the unique challenges associated with

these opportunities. Such mentorship can provide guidance on course design, research collaboration, and strategic career development, including navigating promotion and tenure processes.

Operational Goals: Units

1. **Support Curricular Updating and Innovation:** Provide resources and support to reevaluate curricula for degree programs at all levels, enabling units to adapt and expand their curricula to reflect emerging interdisciplinary opportunities and ensuring flexibility for integrating cross-school and interdisciplinary courses that complement disciplinary training.

   Contexts that require support include the development of new interdisciplinary degree programs, the creation of cross-degree team-based capstone options that encourage collaboration across schools, and the integration of experiential learning opportunities that leverage cross-disciplinary perspectives. Units could also consider curricular strategies that leverage interdisciplinary programs like Bass Connections.

2. **Assess Opportunities for Cross-School Efficiencies:** Evaluate opportunities to enhance teaching efficiency through cross-school collaboration.

   Similar courses taught in multiple units could in some cases be consolidated into a single cross-school course. Coordinating course offerings could also enhance student access to high-demand subjects, while shared teaching lines would free up faculty capacity for new or advanced course development.

3. **Expand Mechanisms to Address Cross-School Teaching Challenges:** Develop solutions to address challenges that units face when faculty engage in cross-school teaching or interdisciplinary initiatives.

   Options could include allocating resources for teaching coverage, balancing faculty workload, facilitating cross-school collaboration without compromising unit priorities, and exploring opportunities for calendar alignment, as discussed in the "Recommendations for Longer-Term 'Win-Win' Collaboration" section of the report.

4. **Leverage Inter-School Expertise:** Establish effective mechanisms to identify and engage faculty in other units who bring complementary expertise, enriching educational programs and fostering cross-disciplinary learning.

   By leveraging inter-school expertise, units can offer students access to a broader range of perspectives, skills, and methodologies, enhancing interdisciplinary experiences.

5. **Identify and Respond to Emerging Interdisciplinary Interests:** Equip units with tools and strategies to proactively identify and respond to emerging interdisciplinary areas of interest among students, faculty, and external stakeholders.

6. **Establish Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement tools and processes to assess the effectiveness of cross-school and interdisciplinary initiatives, incorporating feedback from students, faculty, and external stakeholders.

Assessment should consider evaluation of learning outcomes, student satisfaction, and long-term career impacts. Ongoing evaluation helps units identify best practices, make data-driven adjustments, and ensure that cross-disciplinary programs remain relevant, effective, and aligned with strategic goals.

Operational Goals: Central Administration

1. **Provide Financial and Other Resource Support:** Provide centralized funding mechanisms, grants, and financial incentives to support cross-school teaching, interdisciplinary research, and innovative course/capstone development.

   Relevant contexts include dedicated budgets for pilot programs, seed funding for interdisciplinary research, and financial compensation models that fairly credit faculty for cross-school teaching and enable units to support cross-school teaching within their own financial models.

2. **Provide Centralized Infrastructure and Technology Support:** Establish and maintain centralized digital platforms and administrative systems that facilitate cross-school course discovery, collaboration, and resource sharing.

   Relevant contexts include integrated course management systems, shared digital workspaces, and cross-unit communication tools that reduce administrative barriers and enhance operational efficiency, as well as comprehensive, searchable course catalogs, pathway visualization tools, and real-time updates on cross-school course offerings.

3. **Create an Inventory of Policies and Procedures:** An accessible inventory of policies and procedures related to cross-school teaching requirements, credit allocation, and faculty evaluation criteria for interdisciplinary contributions would allow schools to borrow from one another and facilitate any sensible university-wide harmonization.

4. **Provide Professional Development and Training:** Offer centralized professional development programs and training opportunities to prepare faculty and staff for cross-disciplinary teaching, research, and leadership roles.

   Some options for training include workshops on interdisciplinary course design and teaching strategies, leadership training for cross-school program coordinators, and peer-learning communities for faculty engaged in cross-school initiatives.

5. **Collect and Assess Data on Impact and Effectiveness:** Implement centralized data collection and assessment systems to measure the impact and effectiveness of cross-school and interdisciplinary programs, as well as to identify trends and emerging interest in cross-school opportunities.

   Data collection could include tracking student course-selection patterns and educational outcomes, faculty engagement, cross-disciplinary research productivity, and overall institutional impact, enabling data-driven strategic planning and continuous improvement.

Appendix B: Recommendations Table

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION	GOAL ALIGNMENT	FEASIBILITY	OWNER
Interdisciplinary "Shorts"	Expand short-form courses and hackathon-style competitions for interdisciplinary learning to promote low-stakes, high-impact engagement across disciplines	Students (#3) – Support opportunities for interdisciplinary exposure Faculty (#4) – Support interdisciplinary course development and teaching Units (#4) – Leverage inter-school expertise	Moderate	OVPIS; LILE
Cross-School Capstones in Priority Areas	Develop a broader array of cross-school capstones in strategic areas where collaborative, real-world work is critical	Students (#2) – Ensure feasibility of fruitful cross-disciplinary pathways Students (#3) – Support opportunities for interdisciplinary exposure Students (#4) – Provide clearer channels for cross-school discovery Students (#6) – Reduce barriers for mentorship and peer collaboration Faculty (#4) – Support interdisciplinary course development and teaching Units (#1) – Support curricular updating and innovation Units (#4)– Leverage inter-school expertise	Ambitious	OVPIS; Participating schools
AI Tool for Curricular Discovery	Launch an AI-powered discovery tool to help students and faculty understand policies and discover/navigate opportunities across schools	Students (#1) – Illuminate cross-disciplinary pathways Students (#4) – Provide clearer channels for cross-school discovery Faculty (#1) – Streamline and clarify policies for cross-school teaching Central Admin (#2) – Provide centralized infrastructure and technology support	Easy	OVPIS; OIT

Library of "Level-Ups"	Expand a "level-up" library to give students the preparation and confidence to succeed in unfamiliar fields	Students (#2) – Ensure feasibility of fruitful cross-disciplinary pathways Students (#3) – Support opportunities for interdisciplinary exposure Faculty (#4) – Support interdisciplinary course development and teaching Units (#1) – Support curricular updating and innovation Central Admin (#2) – Provide centralized infrastructure and technology support	Moderate	LILE; Participating schools
Major Donor Pool to Support Schools that Embrace Cross-Disciplinary Opportunities	Cultivate a donor pool to advance cross-school priorities to financially support and incentivize faculty and schools that embrace cross-school teaching	Central Admin (#1) – Provide financial and other resource support	Ambitious	Office of the President; Office of the Provost
"Easy Wins" and "Harder Win-Wins" for Units	Prompt units to pursue easy wins and strategic collaborations, phasing in a suite of proposed reforms that range from quick fixes to deeper, systemic alignment	Goal alignment varies by recommendation	Easy to ambitious	Schools/Units; OVPIS

Appendix C: Committee Members

NAME	AFFILIATION	ROLE
David McAdams	Fuqua School of Business; Arts & Sciences–Economics	Chair
Ed Balleisen	Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies	Ex-Officio
Mark Borsuk	Pratt School of Engineering–Civil & Environmental Engineering	Faculty Representative
Kate Bundorf	Sanford School of Public Policy	Faculty Representative
Katelyn Cai	Undergraduate Student, Arts & Sciences ’26	Undergraduate Student Representative
James Chappel	Arts & Sciences-History	Faculty Representative
Megan Huchko	School of Medicine–Obstetrics & Gynecology; Duke Global Health Institute	Faculty Representative
Jacqueline McMillian-Bohler	School of Nursing	Faculty Representative
Hector Monterroso	Ph.D. Student, Pratt School of Engineering	Graduate Student Representative
Chelsea Nielsen	J.D.-M.E.M. student, School of Law/Nicholas School of the Environment	Professional Student Representative
Meghan O’Neil	Office of the Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies	Project Manager
Charlie Nunn	Arts & Sciences–Evolutionary Anthropology	Faculty Representative
William Pan	Nicholas School of the Environment–Environmental Natural Sciences; Duke Global Health Institute	Faculty Representative
Jonathan Wiener	School of Law	Faculty Representative
Danielle Wiggins	School of Medicine–Medical Physics	Staff Representative
Norbert Wilson	Divinity School	Faculty Representative