



DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY  
Strategic Plan 2018-2023

ACHIEVING SURGICAL LEADERSHIP







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# Letter from the Chair

**Achieving surgical leadership** demands bold ambition and exceptionally dedicated people. At UNC's Department of Surgery, we are fortunate to be rich in both. Our strategic plan is the result of an incredible amount of collaborative, thoughtful, and dedicated work from across the Department.

When we began this strategic journey, we faced pressures common to academic surgical departments around the country, as well as our own unique cultural challenges. As the new Chair of the Department, it was important to me that we stepped back and took the time to redefine our vision and mission, uniting all nine surgical divisions into a single unit, allowing us to work together towards a common future. We examined our past performance as a department, re-evaluated our role within the broader UNC Health Care system, and dreamed big about how to chart our path forward in an ever-changing industry. What we discovered has given us a clear direction to reach the next level of academic surgical leadership.

We believe that a **strategic investment in growing research** is of key importance to truly lead in the tripartite mission. Therefore, building on our research enterprise and incentivizing active research engagement among our people are at the core of our strategy. By contributing to the advancement of patient care through discovery science, education, ethics, global surgery, and health services research, UNC will be at the forefront of surgical innovation and clinical care excellence. This, in turn, will enable us to meet the complex needs of our patients and promote further clinical programmatic growth – two main tenets of our professional passion.

I am incredibly thankful to everyone who participated in this planning process, and am proud to share our 5-year strategic plan. As always, I invite you to engage with our faculty, residents, and staff as we deliver on our vision to be the nation's leading public academic Department of Surgery.

**Melina R. Kibbe**

MD, FACS, FAHA

Colin G. Thomas Jr.  
Distinguished Professor and Chair

UNC Department of Surgery



# Strategic Planning Overview

Development of this strategic plan began in March 2017 through a collaborative effort engaging the Chair, Division Chiefs, Vice Chairs, and members of the UNC Health Care Strategic Planning and Network Development teams.

The impetus and timing for this planning process centered on several significant events. The recruitment of Dr. Melina Kibbe as the Chair provided a unique opportunity for new leadership to develop and establish a culture of surgical excellence. Shifting industry and system trends towards further integration required reevaluation of the Department's role in the broader UNC Health Care community. Increased local and statewide competition demanded new approaches to best serve our patients while remaining financially solvent in the modern era of healthcare reimbursement. Looking forward, as the UNC Health Care system continues to grow, it is imperative for the Department of Surgery to know what services should be optimized and expanded, and (increasingly important), where to provide them to meet the needs of patients whose interactions with health providers continue to evolve in the 21st century.

The goal of this plan was to renew and advance the Department's mission. To that end, we aspired to encourage multidisciplinary and strategic thinking, align leadership towards a shared vision, set strategic areas of focus for the next five years, and implement priority initiatives to become a leading institution.

## **Our year-long process included:**

1. A benchmark gap assessment of the nation's leading Departments of Surgery
2. An in-depth analysis of our department's current state across market, financial, clinical, quality, research, and education data
3. Divisional analyses of clinical growth opportunities at the procedural level
4. A collective prioritization of final initiatives to pursue by the planning team

We are proud to share this strategic plan with our community of UNC Health Care system partners, faculty, trainees, patients, and community leaders as the blueprint for our future.



# Strategic Framework

## Vision

To be the nation's leading public academic department of surgery

## Mission

To provide the highest quality patient care to all people through innovation, world-class research, and training the next generation of surgical health care professionals and scientists

### PEOPLE

Invest in the career development and well-being of our people

### RESEARCH

Promote advances in surgical care through innovation and world-class research

### CLINICAL CARE

Provide high quality patient care to all people

### EDUCATION

Train tomorrow's leading surgeons, scientists, and educators

### DEVELOPMENT

Cultivate partnerships that honor our past and help us achieve our goals



# Our People & Environment

The Department of Surgery's success has always focused on recruiting and retaining outstanding and diverse faculty, trainees, advanced practice providers, and staff while fostering their growth in a collegial environment. Choosing to pursue a career in a public academic medical environment requires a unique combination of skills and motivations. Our people are focused on serving others; they care about our patients' health and the well-being of their colleagues. They possess a constant curiosity and strive for excellence in all that they do by seeking new knowledge and mentoring the next generation of surgeons and scientists. Our strategy for supporting the individual and building upon our human capital focuses on making investments in career development at all stages while fostering a supportive and engaging work place environment.





## Goals

- Develop a professional community aligned to a shared vision and mission
- Maintain a healthy work place environment that supports professionalism and respect for all
- Support individual career development through personal and professional growth
- Create a supportive and collegial environment that fosters individual well-being
- Promote a culture of diversity and inclusion



# Invest in the career development and well-being of our people

## Strategies

- Provide advanced training and career development opportunities
- Develop and maintain a formal mentorship program for our faculty and trainees
- Ensure timely academic promotion
- Celebrate the accomplishments of individuals and teams through new communications such as publications, newsletters, press releases, and social media
- Set high expectations for professionalism in the work place environment
- Provide education on respect for diversity and inclusion
- Maintain a healthy work place environment that promotes wellness
- Value all people for their contributions to our surgical community



# Research

Research is critical for the advancement of medicine, for the improvement of health, and for the well-being of patients. UNC as an institution has an established track record of excellence and results, as it ranks sixth in the nation for federally funded research.

UNC's culture provides an ideal environment for multidisciplinary collaborations across departments and specialties, and our surgeons and scientists work together to translate innovative therapies for our patients in the operating rooms and in clinics. We are also at the forefront of global surgery and health services research.

Our Department of Surgery is boldly pursuing a research growth strategy that targets new and diverse funding, increases research productivity, improves patient outcomes, disseminates knowledge more broadly, and more. We have implemented initiatives to support faculty and trainee research, including the establishment of an infrastructure that streamlines research needs and resources. Our investments encourage creativity and provide frequent opportunities to make connections with researchers in seemingly disparate fields.





# Promote advances in surgical care through innovation in world-class research

## Goals

- Develop advanced therapies for patients with inflammatory- and injury-mediated surgical diseases
- Create and implement sustainable health care systems in low-income environments in North Carolina and around the globe
- Examine how patients access services and surgical professionals, and develop solutions to improve quality of care, access, and cost
- Build an efficient, effective, and collaborative research infrastructure



## Strategies

- Identify, nurture, and support physician scientists and investigators throughout their careers at UNC
- Recruit and retain top surgical scientists and investigators throughout the Department
- Invest in new internal resources to support resident and faculty research, including a foundational education of how to pursue surgical research endeavors and robust mentorship opportunities
- Build clinical and translational infrastructure to best facilitate collaborative bench-to-clinic or clinic-to-bench research initiatives
- Provide regular opportunities to engage the public, surgical scientist peers, and broader academic community and showcase our research outcomes and health innovations
- Pursue new creative funding sources dedicated to improving the financial health of our research enterprise




# Clinical Care

The Department of Surgery is the engine and innovator in the delivery of UNC Health Care's quaternary clinical activity. We are at the forefront of integrating the latest surgical research and cutting-edge technologies to treat patients dealing with a breadth of complex diseases. Our internationally accomplished faculty, leading national programs, and diverse complex care capabilities function as differentiators for the patient-centered care that we provide. To achieve our goal of providing a comprehensive platform of care for the patients we serve, we will build on this strong foundation and challenge the existing clinical paradigms and associated dogmas.

## Our clinical strategy focuses on three main objectives:

- Expand our complex surgical programs through new investments
- Innovate surgical programs that align with our research enterprise to further embolden our capabilities and meet the evolving complex needs of our patients
- Optimize our efficiencies of care and expand our presence across the community to help lower the cost of care and make services more convenient for our patients and their families



We are making great strides in advancing our clinical strategy through targeted faculty recruitment. With the forthcoming construction of UNC's new state-of-the-art, patient-centered surgical tower, we are primed to lead North Carolina and the nation in providing complex, compassionate surgical care in the coming decade.



## Goals

- Increase the number of nationally and regionally recognized clinical programs
- Multiply our base of multidisciplinary clinical collaborative teams focused on providing care for patients with complex diseases in a value-based healthcare environment
- Grow our clinical footprint locally, regionally, and across the state to better serve all patients closer to home
- Expand our role as a surgical destination of choice for patients and referring providers

## Strategies

- Create an integrated platform to rapidly identify clinical strengths and opportunities
- Cultivate new technologies by investing in an enterprise of cutting-edge clinical capabilities that improve the quality of patients' lives
- Invest in a community partnership through surgeon engagement with established and new referring partners
- Engage in targeted recruitment and active retention of surgical leaders and innovators to expand our clinical and research platform
- Promote collaborative partnerships across the faculty and our clinical divisions to capitalize on strengths in our department
- Establish institutional service standards that enhance efficiencies across our clinical enterprise
- Grow our clinical volumes by providing the right service at the right setting, both on our main campus and in the community

Provide quality  
patient care to  
all people



# Education

The rapid advancement of surgical science and information technology continues to alter how we approach surgical education. Our trainees and educators must continuously adapt to health care's shifting landscape, while also preparing for a lifelong career of clinical complexity that requires the ability to think and act independently and decisively.

UNC Surgery has a long history of excellence in surgical training, educational innovation, and program improvement. At all levels of training, curricula and teaching methods are continuously reviewed and refined to reach the highest level in surgical education. In this way, we ensure that our talented medical students, residents, and fellows are fully prepared when they pass through our doors to lead the next generation of surgeons, scientists, and educators.

Looking ahead, our strategy for education focuses on the trainees' and educators' experience. We will continue to build on past successes while enhancing the ways in which educational excellence is achieved through collaboration and academic rigor.







## Train tomorrow's leading surgeons, scientists, and educators

### Goals

- Develop and implement novel training programs to attract and recruit exceptional individuals to be future surgeons, surgeon scientists, and surgical professionals
- Enrich the overall academic environment and trainee experience
- Create new approaches to develop our faculty as national leaders in surgical education
- Further foster a departmental culture of highly engaged educators and trainees

### Strategies

- Ensure every trainee receives the highest level of learning driven by our strong, complex surgical programs
- Engender a supportive training environment that includes robust wellness, resilience, and cultural competency programs
- Provide well-rounded surgical instruction through diverse forms of learning (e.g., robotic simulations, complex surgery observations, shared learning, and community engagement)
- Seek opportunities for collaboration across departments, institutions, and industry partners to develop new educational best practices
- Invest in the career development of our educators through local and national training programs, and promote their leadership among the broader academic surgical community
- Celebrate teaching excellence and achievements at all levels

# Development

Throughout the Department of Surgery's history, grateful families, former trainees, corporations, and local/global community partners have helped us overcome challenges and optimize opportunities through philanthropy.

While healthcare in general faces decreasing federal research dollars and clinical revenues, we have never been more determined to deliver the highest quality patient care, provide world-class training for tomorrow's surgeons, and conduct pioneering research. Philanthropy will be a deciding factor in our ability to capitalize on advances in science and technology to be true innovators.

Philanthropic support will enable our residents and fellows to build a strong foundation for lifelong careers, allow our surgeon investigators to pursue disruptive research ideas, and facilitate the recruitment and retention of top faculty leaders.

By deepening existing donor partnerships and initiating new ones through our shared mission, we will be able to invest in all areas that matter today and secure our exceptional legacy long into the future.





# Cultivate partnerships that honor our past and help us achieve our goals

## Goals

- Ensure dependable, sustainable funding that enables the Department of Surgery to invest in its expert caregivers and scientists and to expand patient care, research, and training programs
- Inspire ambitious thinking and leadership by securing philanthropic investments and partnerships that make it possible to pursue transformational ideas
- Promote the Department of Surgery mission, share its rich history, and communicate the importance of philanthropy through engagement with a broad range of constituents—from local and UNC community members to partners around the globe

## Strategies

- Identify unique philanthropic investment opportunities that engage and connect caregivers, patient families, former trainees, and volunteers
- Develop new corporate partnerships that further our mission to better serve all those in need of surgical care
- Solidify and deepen our relationships with former residents, fellows, and Department faculty
- Collaborate across UNC to leverage relationships and funding opportunities that optimize giving and achieve greater goals
- Expand international philanthropic partnerships that benefit world health and broaden the Department global footprint
- Provide meaningful stewardship and proof of impact to our donors and partners through regular engagement
- Engender a culture among faculty, staff, and our community that demonstrates mutual understanding of the role of philanthropy in attaining the Department of Surgery strategic goals



# The Planning Team



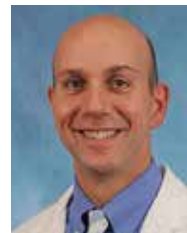
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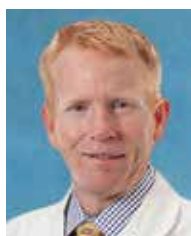
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