MISSION
We study the fundamental ecological processes that shape the world, inspire and train future generations, and create science-based solutions to environmental problems. Building on our legacy of innovation, we create change by harnessing diverse tools and perspectives in a collaborative community.

VISION
To lead the world in ecological science.

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

INCLUSIVITY
Diverse backgrounds and opinions lead to a vibrant exchange of ideas and advancement of science. We strive to foster a community in which all individuals are welcome and all feel valued and respected.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY
Because not all questions can be answered within disciplinary bounds, we seek collaborations with other fields of inquiry and respect pluralistic paths to discovery.

INTEGRITY
We are honest and open in our interactions, professionally respectful, and pursue the truth in our scientific endeavors.

INTELLECTUAL CURiosity
We are motivated by a desire to understand the natural world.

INNOVATION
We seek creative, novel, and effective approaches that advance ecological science, education, and application.
INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE OF INCLUSION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Current state: The Odum School of Ecology seeks to foster a stimulating, collaborative, and inclusive culture. We recognize that a transformative culture of inclusion, which values and advances greater diversity of people and perspectives, requires individual and institutional reflection, and respect. In addition to fostering interpersonal support and respect, we recognize the need to lead in environmental stewardship. Environmental sustainability is currently considered in some of our operations, but needs to be fully embraced and executed.

STRATEGIC GOALS: To create a vibrant, diverse and inclusive environment that will promote creative and effective approaches to research, teaching, and service. We aspire to foster a community that energizes its members, and where productivity and effectiveness are a direct result of our culture. We also aim to be a model of sustainability to the UGA community.

1. FOSTER A CULTURE OF INCLUSION, INTEGRITY, INNOVATION, AND CURIOSITY
Implement concrete activities to support and enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); provide opportunities for improved internal communication; and adopt a code of ethical and responsible conduct across the School.

2. PROMOTE INTER-CONNECTEDNESS WITHIN THE ODUM SCHOOL
Adopt activities to increase teaching and research collaboration among the Odum community, ensure suitable training for faculty-student mentoring, and promote a culture of professional respect among faculty, students and staff.

3. PROMOTE DIVERSE INTERDISCIPLINARY NETWORKS TO ADVANCE INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE
Encourage exposure to diverse fields of scholarship through a visiting scholars program, provide seed funding for collaborative research proposals, initiate an annual faculty research conference, support a vigorous seminar series, and nurture connections between the School and its alumni network.

4. COMMIT TO AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE CULTURE
Make environmental sustainability central to all Odum activities—including our academic, research, public service and outreach programs, events, student engagement, and building and grounds operations, including acquisition and stewardship of funds relating to sustainability.
ADVANCING SCHOLARSHIP

Current state: We strive to achieve excellence in research by recruiting an outstanding, intellectually and demographically diverse faculty, providing faculty with a stimulating, collegial and state-of-the-art research environment, and actively fostering faculty development. Our School is distinctive in our synthetic, conceptual, and holistic approach to environmental science. We are collaborative and are committed to developing deep connections across diverse disciplines as evidence by our joint appointments with units such as Veterinary Medicine, Genetics, the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, and the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources and other collaborative networks at UGA. Through our centers (the River Basin Center and the Center for the Ecology of Infectious Diseases) and other collaborative work we are engaged in, OSE is a campus leader bringing together a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and translating solutions for planetary sustainability.

1. CULTIVATE AN INTELLECTUALLY-STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT
Strive for a research environment that fosters a collaborative culture fueled by intellectual curiosity, within OSE and serving as a nexus for interdisciplinarity at UGA and around the world.

2. INCREASE FACULTY SUPPORT
Develop a specific and actionable plan that provides support, training and mentoring to promote faculty development. Assure that there is sufficient administrative support for faculty to effectively conduct their research and instructional programs. Provide sufficient travel and research support.

3. STRATEGICALLY RECRUIT NEW FACULTY
Pioneer an innovative and strategic means of identifying hiring priorities as encapsulated within our hiring philosophy: “Our recruitment strategy aims to coalesce around centers of excellence, enhancing synergistic, interdisciplinary collaborations within the School. We propose to achieve this by identifying areas of scholarship that add to existing areas of strength whilst simultaneously broadening our thematic diversity through hiring in priority integrative areas”. Hiring decisions will consider advancing these priorities while filling gaps in research and teaching due to new vacancies.

Based on an assessment of our existing strengths and our vision for the future of the School, three strategic hiring areas have been identified. These are: Terrestrial/Microbial Ecosystem Ecology, Evolutionary Responses to Climate Change, and Aquatic Disease/Vector Ecology.
Current state: We offer A.B. and B.S. degrees in Ecology with a current enrollment of approximately 175 undergraduates. In the past 5 years, we created a new degree program, increased undergraduate enrollment by > 50%, launched two online courses, continued our study abroad programs in Costa Rica, and have accounted for 4 Udall Scholars, 1 Goldwater Scholars, 1 Hollings Scholars, and 1 Schwarzman Scholar. Over that same period we boast a 90.8% average placement rate in professional employment and/or advanced studies after graduation.

STRATEGIC GOALS: We propose to pursue four interrelated goals:

1. SUPPORT PROGRAM GROWTH
Support growth in demand for introductory Ecology courses and new offerings in service-learning, skills-based, conceptual, experiential, and online courses.

2. PROMOTE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
Support translational and interdisciplinary undergraduate research and internships by systematically curating and advertising opportunities and fostering graduate-undergraduate student bridges through mentored research experiences.

3. DIVERSIFY COURSE OFFERINGS AND PROMOTE STATE-OF-THE-ART TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
Expand training in cutting edge research methods and concepts, as well as marketable skills in applied and translational ecology.

4. FOSTER EXPOSURE TO NOVEL PERSPECTIVES
Broaden student experience by elevating diverse views in current coursework and via study abroad programs.
VIBRANT GRADUATE PROGRAM

Current state: The Odum School has a vigorous graduate program, comprised of approximately 75 students across two M.S. programs (Conservation Ecology and Sustainable Development (CESD) and Ecology) and one Ph.D. program (Ecology). We attract and train highly-qualified students into our core programs, and through interdisciplinary programs such as Interdisciplinary Disease Ecology Across Scales (IDEAS) and Integrative Conservation and Ecology (ICON). From 2014-2019, OSE graduate students have been awarded 10 NSF Graduate Research fellowships, 1 Fulbright fellowship and 1 Ford Foundation fellowship.

1. DEVELOP AND ENHANCE THE CURRICULUM
Develop and/or enhance curricula that instill in-depth understanding of ecological principles and their applications, and that embrace innovative research, interdisciplinary perspectives, and active-learning strategies.

2. INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Provide training, resources, and professional development opportunities to nurture our students and promote excellence in scientific research, communication, and education.

3. INCREASE FINANCIAL SUPPORT
Focus on access and financial support to improve recruitment and increase retention of students throughout their degree program.
SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

Current state: The School engages with the public and stakeholders in a variety of ways, including activities with K-12 students hosted by EcoReach, solving real-world water-related issues through the River Basin Center, and additional outreach and service activities conducted by faculty and students.

STRATEGIC GOALS:

1. INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AT UGA, THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES, AND REGION
   Increase engagement between the School and the community by increasing support for the EcoReach program and STEMzone. Engage with local governmental and non-profits in Athens-Clarke and Oconee counties and regionally.

2. PROVIDE TRAINING IN SCIENCE COMMUNICATION SKILLS
   Provide opportunities for students and faculty to increase their communication and community engagement skills.

3. MAINTAIN EXPERTISE IN ECOLOGICAL POLICY
   Ensure continuity of expertise in ecological problem solving by recruiting a faculty member in environmental policy who would also serve as the Director of Policy for the River Basin Center.

4. EXPLORE NEW CONNECTIONS
   Promote strategic partnerships with other organizations including NGOs, businesses, municipal, state and federal agencies.
FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

Current state: Innovations in ecological science will require advanced facilities, supporting infrastructure, and highly trained staff. These three areas need to grow with the mission of the School. Our functions have outgrown the School’s current physical facilities and space. Dedicated administrative and research staff are an important source for innovation, creativity, and knowledge; continued investment in their training and development is essential.

STRATEGIC GOALS:
1. IMPROVE SPACE TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE SCHOOL FUNCTIONS
We aspire to house all School faculty, students and staff in a single building that offers high-quality space for research, outreach, and collaboration. We envisage such a building would enhance interactions within the School and foster new and diverse collaborations.

2. ENSURE SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AND THAT SCHOOL STAFFING NEEDS ARE MET
Determine staffing needs that support recent growth in our unit with a 5-year staffing plan and ensure access to state-of-the-art training and development opportunities for staff.

3. IMPROVE RESEARCH FACILITIES
Improve research facilities for faculty, including computing and wet lab infrastructure, and dedicate funds for the upkeep and improvement of research facilities.

4. ADVANCE STRATEGIC FUNDRAISING
Develop a comprehensive funding plan for the School to support all aspects of our mission, including facilities and infrastructure improvements.

5. DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATION PLANS
Develop comprehensive communications plan for the school, including within Odum and in engaging with stakeholders and the broader community.

6. OPTIMIZE SCHOOL EVENTS FOR ENGAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
Coordinate planning of School-wide events to optimize positive impact on School culture and be consistent with commitment to environmental sustainability.